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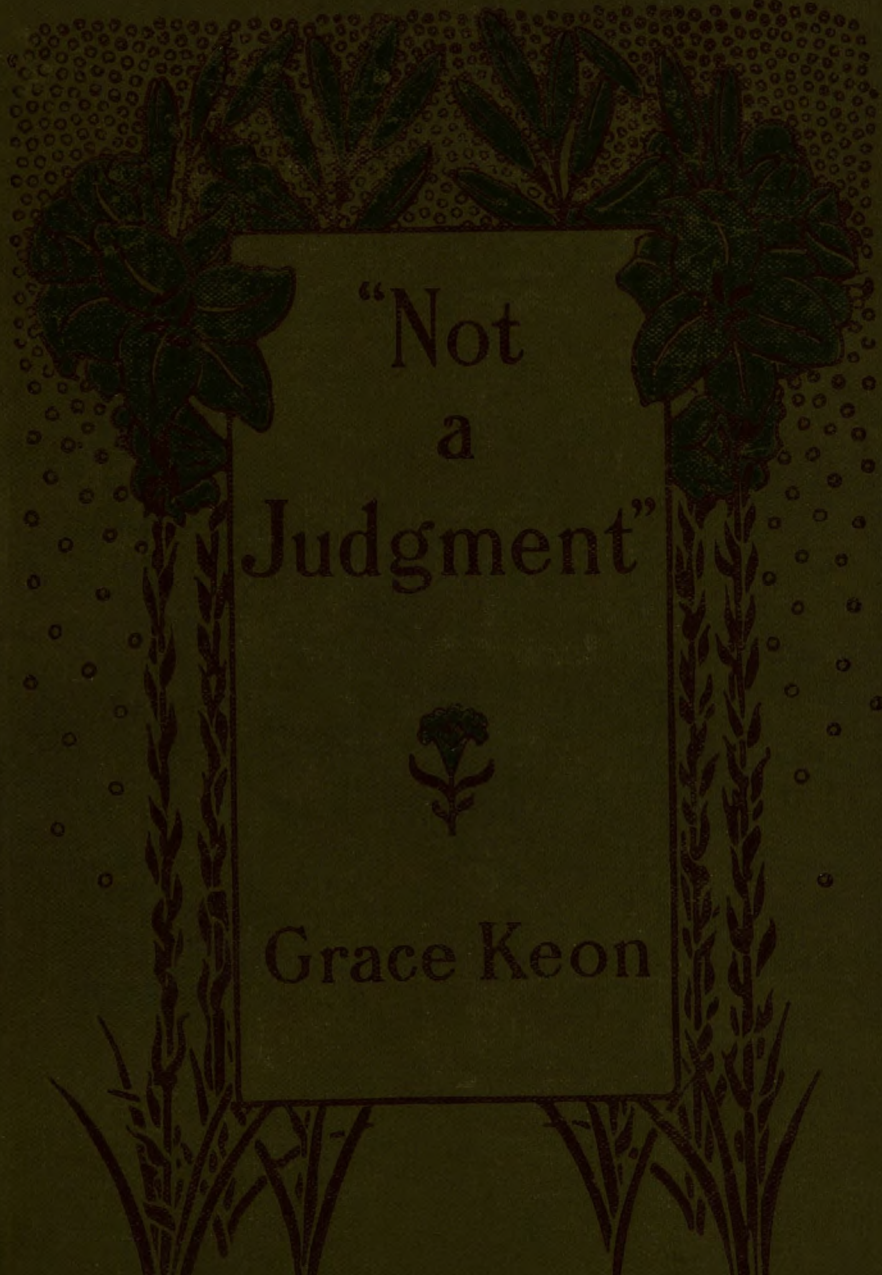
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“Not
a
Judgment”



Grace Keon

"NOT A JUDGMENT"

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**Sacred Heart Church
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“NOT A JUDGMENT—”

BY

GRACE KEON

AUTHOR OF “THE RULER OF THE
KINGDOM”

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

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“NOT A JUDGMENT—”

CHAPTER I

“IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!”

“**N**ONIE McCABE is lost!”

Six hours before this discovery, Nonie McCabe had been of small importance: a mere midget in the press of humanity that filled the great six-story tenement house; a round-faced toddler, whose faltering feet had barely learned their way from the apartments, so-called, that were her home, to the seething street, where men and women, intent on larger cares, failed to observe a tiny child exulting in new-found freedom, delighting in her wonderful escape from watchful eyes, setting out upon unaccustomed, strange, bewildering paths.

“Nonie McCabe is lost!”

The words were passed from lip to lip; they traveled from house to house; they were the concern of all. The very ones who might have stumbled over her diminutive form and put it aside unseeingly, the very ones who had not known or cared to know whether there was a McCabe or babe of any other name young enough to lose itself, those who had no children to go astray, and others who had many, roused at this alarm,

“In the Name of the Law”

and went out into the highways and the byways, enlisting and claiming the interest of all whom they encountered.

In vain. No one had seen a little child with curly fair hair and big blue eyes and checked gingham apron — not one. The little child was lost.

Since anticipation is so much worse than actuality, fear of what might have happened to her weighed upon the spirits of even the most hopeful. Nowhere does the pulse of friendship beat more strongly than in the bosom of the poor; sympathy is the silver thread that binds the heart of want to the heart of suffering. With the mother they dreaded the darkness of the city's streets, the perils to life and limb into which the little child might be venturing even at that moment; they were angry at their own helplessness. “Have you heard?” “Is there news?” “Did you ask?” No need to complete those sentences. All had heard; all had asked; there was no news. The police had been notified, and were even then on the lookout for a baby answering to Nonie McCabe's description. In fact, for a midget who had pursued her four-and-twenty months of life so serenely, the world unknowing, and by the world unknown, Nonie McCabe became the moving figure in an incipient drama, conspicuous by her absence from the center of the stage.

Although it was nearly midnight, none thought of sleep except the children. Two or three of the men-folk had volunteered to help in the search and had not yet returned; some of the women stood at the door with

“In the Name of the Law”

the mother, who could not restrain her vociferous sorrow. A fine rain had begun — a not unpleasant rain, although there seemed a hint of frost in the cool September air. It was slowly settling into that soft, steady downpour which insinuates its way into the clothing with such quiet effectiveness, and it but added to the unfortunate mother's misery. She sat upon the doorstep weeping — those silent tears the epilogue to a noisy outburst that had served to exhaust her.

“Who's them do be comin' down the street now?” asked Mrs. Reilly, shading her eyes with her hand — not that she could see any more clearly by that movement, but because it was habitual. “There's two —”

“On'y Dan Farrell and Tom Baker,” answered another, somewhat testily, as she turned to look at the figures slowly taking substance out of the darkness. “They'd know nothin' about the child. 'Tisn't Dan Farrell id bother his head over any one livin' but himself.”

The name seemed to awaken erstwhile slumbering sorrow.

“Farrell!” echoed Mrs. McCabe, from her position on the doorstep. “It's ill-luck to have aught to do with them Farrells. I might 'a' known somethin' id happen my little angel with Mollie Farrell that wild about her. Nothin' like that never happened afore — to none of my childher — an' it's all of Mollie Farrell. Oh, God help us, but to think of that poor little baby alone in this black night, ne'er a wan to heed her or look to her —”

“In the Name of the Law”

She broke down again, sobbing bitterly. Her voice, shrill with pain, floated into the dimly lighted hall, where, on the lowest step of a flight of stairs was seated a girl's figure: a slight figure, clad in a worn green dress, with a mop of dark hair hiding her face from view. Her body was bent almost to her knees, and her hands were clasped across them. They had tightened nervously at Mrs. McCabe's words — nor did they relax when she heard Mrs. Reilly's milder tones.

“Tut, woman! 'Tis the grief in you wrongs the girl. Mollie Farrell wouldn't hurt a fly the Lord made. And you know you'd 'a' lost Nonie last year on'y for the same Mollie Farrell — Ayeh! Dan Farrell! Did you see any sign of my man up yonder?”

The approaching figures had reached the door and stopped. He whom she addressed seemed inclined to enter the house, but his companion held his arm and urged him on, engaging his whole attention, so that he did not answer the woman's question. She muttered under her breath at him. The crouching form upon the stairs shot up to an erect posture, as the disputing voices of the two young men came to her ears, and a pair of elfish eyes gleamed from under that shock of hair. The next moment she was on her feet, with a name on her lips.

“Dan!”

She darted out of the hallway, startling the women. Dan Farrell had yielded to his companion's persistence, but she ran quickly after them. “Dan, Dan!” she

“In the Name of the Law”

called again. Her brother turned, almost mechanically. There was something more than the usual entreaty in those young tones—an undercurrent of pain. And Dan heard it. But his friend tugged at his arm.

“What’s the matter with you?” he asked. “How long will the fellers wait, do you think?”

The girl stretched out one hand, imploringly, pushing back the mop of hair from her eyes with the other.

“Say, Dan, mom got home early an’ she made a bit of soda-cake, an’ there’s tea on the fire. Will you come up an’ have some, Dan? You can come, too, Tom Baker, ’cause mom’s asleep by this time, sure—”

“What do we want with tea and soda-cake?” asked Tom Baker, his laugh the loud and lordly one of a boy of twenty. “Little girl, run home!”

“Go on,” said Dan Farrell, spurred to command by the scorn in his friend’s voice. “Whatcher doin’ down here, anyhow? It’s twelve o’clock.”

“Tisn’t!” cried his sister, indignantly.

“Well, it’s near it. Go upstairs. I don’t want no one runnin’ after me.”

The girl stood staring at their receding figures, her hand still outstretched, the other pushing back her hair. Intense disappointment was her chief expression. Slowly, then, her arm dropped to her side, and she came back to the doorway from which she had just issued. Mrs. McCabe turned her head away with much unnecessary ostentation. No one spoke, and no one would have spoken save that Mrs. Reilly, in the compassion of her

“In the Name of the Law”

heart, did not like to let the girl feel that all were unfriendly.

“You’re too young to be worryin’ yet, child,” she said. “Wait till you have to. Wait till it’s your man you’re afther, with every cent of his week’s pay in his pocket. Then you can fret,” went on this cheerful comforter, in tones meant to carry with them the utmost consolation. “Lord, dear! A baby an’ a drunken man are always lucky, as I was just this blessed minute tellin’ Mis’ McCabe here. Don’t bother, but go to bed as he told you.”

Without vouchsafing so much as a single glance by way of reply, Mollie passed inside. Accustomed to rebuffs from Dan, whom she worshiped, she could bear them patiently — yet she was proud enough to resent any remark, no matter how sympathetic, from one she considered an outsider. And her heart was sore because of another thing: the lost baby had been her care almost since its birth. Mrs. McCabe was wont to say that she had never known a moment’s thought for Nonie because of Mollie Farrell. And now the girl — a child, really — felt that in some way she had neglected her duty. She was as worried and anxious as the mother dare be, and this, allied to the bitter comments she had overheard, made her suffer still more deeply.

Mollie Farrell could never find words to express either her sorrow or her joy — not even afterwards, when she learned the value of words. But she felt all that she could not utter. In this life that “begins with a scream,

“In the Name of the Law”

and ends with a moan,” deep comprehension is sometimes given to dumb souls—those souls that can but bow the head in mute thankfulness or silent resignation.

So, if you grow to know the worth of Mollie Farrell from these pages, it will scarcely be because of the things she says.

When she reached the top floor—and to do this there were five long and weary flights to climb—her first movement was toward the bedroom. She stood listening, anxious to assure herself that her mother slept. Satisfied on this point, she stealthily added coal, bit by bit, to the fire, placing each black lump with careful fingers on the embers beneath. She did not want her mother to awaken and scold her for such extravagance. Then she moved the teapot nearer the heat—all this done hoping against hope that Dan would repent of his folly and return.

Seating herself at the table, then, she pulled a threadbare sock over one hand, while with unskilled fingers she tried to darn it—in and out, as she had seen her mother do in the few spare moments that were hers after a long day's toil. The task was distasteful, but the mother had thrown them from her in anger that very evening, declaring that not another penny would she spend on Dan until he earned it. And so those thin red fingers worked the coarse needle in and out of the holes, making unsightly little bunches—sufficient to fill the gaps, but leaving everything to be desired in the way of neatness.

It is a scene the like of which any one can see at

“In the Name of the Law”

midnight in New York City's great East Side — this room in which Mollie Farrell sat now, with its poor furnishings, its bareness, its ineffectual striving after cleanliness, its dim light helping to accentuate the poverty of the whole. A touching scene. And whether the story of Mollie Farrell will interest the reader, I cannot venture to predict. It will, if he cares for truth; it will, if he wishes to know the life of one real little daughter of the people, who lifted her head from the Slough of Despond — which here is aimlessness — and opened those eyes through which her great soul shone, upon the world that had been and the world she created for herself.

Gradually the stitches grew slower and still more slow, the dark head drooped until it rested on her bosom. She shook herself impatiently, and continued the uninteresting task, rising once to replenish the fire as before. The hours wore on. They were not peaceful hours. Outside the rain had ceased, and the moon was shining. The street was filled with discordant noises; with cat-calls and the loud mouthing of a harmonica; the swift patter of feet; the scoldings of a wakeful wife greeting her liege lord; the sound of opening windows and many voices in expostulation, as the liege lord objected strenuously to his wife's welcome; derisive words of advice. But even these ceased at last, and silence reigned. The sock fell from the little girl's hand, hung on her knee a moment, fell then to the floor. Only a child in years, she slept as healthy children do — heavily, profoundly. The coal burned up red, and then, its vitality exhausted,

“In the Name of the Law”

died away to gray ashes. Mollie moved and muttered a little as the room grew chilly.

And the moonlight, the tender moonlight, streamed in through the window on the rough floor. It crept around until it touched her hair, and then her face, and her hands, and her whole figure, enveloping her like a benediction. Her breath was soft and regular as an infant's. The worried gravity — its habitual expression — had left her face.

Nothing disturbed her. She did not hear heavy footsteps on the stairs outside, nor the joyous scream with which Mrs. McCabe welcomed back her lost offspring; nor did the loud-voiced explanations of the finding of the little one trouble for an instant the quiet of her repose. But a pleasant dream stooped down to her out of the Shadowland of slumbers. She thought that she was holding Nonie in her arms. . . . The little hands were about her neck. . . . The little lips were kissing her. . . . She smiled — and the smile lighted up that dark face to a gentle peace that was almost beautiful.

And so the last hour of Mollie Farrell's childhood passed away.

At the end of it there came the patter of feet up those oil-clothed stairs once more, with a pause at the top, and the sound of heavy breathing. Cautiously, fearfully, some one moved along the hall, bent to the keyhole, listened. All was silent as the grave. Then a voice called tremblingly: —

“ Mollie ! ”

“In the Name of the Law”

No answer from those sleeping lips. He turned the knob, shaking it violently, and this time she who had waited for him often under similar circumstances sat bolt upright.

“Mollie, Mollie!” he called again, even more urgently, a quiver of fear in his voice, and his labored breathing reached her. Swiftly she ran across the room and slipped back the bolt.

Her brother staggered in.

But what a spectacle! His head bare, his clothes tossed, his eyes wild with terror, his cheek covered with blood from a wound on his forehead, from which a tiny stream of red was still flowing.

Mollie Farrell was in training in a hard school. She did not cry out at the dreadful sight of him, but shut the door, double-bolting it this time. The water in the kettle was still warm, and taking down the tin basin that hung over the kitchen sink she poured some into it.

“Be quiet, Dan,” she said. “You’ll wake mother.”

For the lad had thrown himself face downward on the rickety sofa. He was shaking with fear or horror or both, his breath coming in deep sobs.

“What is it?” she whispered. She was growing afraid of his silence.

“Oh, Mollie, I’ve killed him! I’ve killed him! I’ve killed Tom Baker!”

The girl reeled. Her mental vision took in the calamity, and she stared at him with widely opened eyes, unable to speak or to move. Then a passionate hope

“In the Name of the Law”

struck her. This was the raving of a disturbed mind; his imagination was running away with him.

“Wash your face,” she commanded imperatively. “Here — this minute.”

He obeyed that imperious tone, being in no condition to protest. But his teeth chattered, and his hands shook, and his eyes were starting out of his ghastly countenance. He tried to remove the stains from cheek and forehead, and took the towel she handed to him, flinging it away a moment later, as the realization of what had happened was borne home to him again.

“I’ve done it, I tell you! I’ve killed Tom Baker!” He shrieked the words at the top of his lungs. “He threw a glass at me — and when I felt it crash — Oh, I went mad, I must ’ave been mad!” He shuddered. “Mollie, my God! Mollie, he’s dead. He’s dead, an’ I’ve killed him!”

Aroused by the noise, Mrs. Farrell appeared in the doorway of the bedroom, hastily throwing a skirt over her night apparel. And just then, for the third time that eventful night, there came other feet along the hall. Heavy and slow they came, every step a knell of doom to the guilty, trembling boy. Mollie gripped her brother’s hand in an agony of fear. The mother, with a scream at the terror in both their faces, sprang toward her son, throwing herself on her knees, putting up both her arms, encircling him. And, in solemn tone, came the awful injunction: —

“Open this door! Open, in the name of the law!”

CHAPTER II

AN UNPROMISING HEROINE

MOLLIE had run after the younger of the two policemen; one of them was already down the stairs, his hand on Dan's arm. She clutched at the blue sleeve, and her fingers were like a vise. The man could not see her face, but he pitied the fear in her voice.

"What will they do to Dan?" she asked. "What will they do to him?"

He hesitated.

"I can't say — no one can say — unless the other fellow dies."

She went back again. Mrs. Farrell was tearing her hair, beating her breast, shrieking. The neighbors in the adjoining apartments — Nonie McCabe's mother included — were with her, trying to comfort her. There was a haze over Mollie's eyes. She fell into a chair and crouched in it, her body drawn up, her arms locked about her knees, her chin settled forward, her black hair tumbling over her burning, mist-filled, blacker orbs.

"What will they do to Dan?"

She said never a word — uttered never a cry — but

An Unpromising Heroine

the sentence pounded its way into her brain — thump, thump! thump, thump! What — will — they — do — to — Dan? How it frightened her. How her heart throbbed in unison with the beating of her nerves. What — will — they — do — to — Dan?

One by one the women withdrew. Mrs. Farrell had grown calmer. She was lying on the sofa, sobbing, sobbing—but tired now. Mollie could not stir until the last one had gone. Then she moved from her cramped position, and stole softly across the room to her mother's side. She could not speak—she would not know what to say; she could not caress her; children of the people are not demonstrative. So she sat down again, pressing her body close to the sofa, and stared into her mother's face, straining after words in the silence, straining after a single expression that would convey her sympathetic presence to the older woman.

But nothing came.

Instead, she set her teeth into her under lip to keep back that shuddering question: What — will — they do — to — Dan? That sentence hurt her — she must not say it aloud. What would her mother do if ever she said those words? What would her mother do?

So Mrs. Farrell lay prostrate, sobbing and moaning, until, toward the dawn, she fell into a troubled sleep, and the girl crouched lower and lower; after a little, when she felt that the other would be unconscious of it, she rested her head against her dress, taking comfort

An Unpromising Heroine

from the touch. So day broke and found them there. The mother sleeping, with white worn face and drooping mouth; the daughter crouching, her big black eyes fixed unseeingly upon vacancy.

The news spread like wildfire. In a little while every one in the neighborhood had heard of the tragedy which had taken place the previous night. Nor were the facts exaggerated. Tom Baker was indeed lying at death's door, his assailant a prisoner. The occupants of the tall tenement whose topmost story sheltered the Farrells swelled with importance that long Sunday every time the occurrence was mentioned. They were surprised to see only two paragraphs about it in the papers. But that was because it had happened so late — Monday would probably find a whole page given to it — maybe with Dan Farrell's photograph and Tom Baker's. Maybe, too, there'd be a picture of the block itself! No wonder they felt important.

Even those who had the slightest speaking acquaintance with Mrs. Farrell felt it a pressing duty to call on her and condole with her — only incidentally, of course, consumed with curiosity to see how she bore up under "her trouble." There was a sort of melancholy pride in the greeting she gave to each newcomer. She was the center of attraction. "His poor mother!" said her friends, leaving her. "His poor mother!" said those who did not know her. "God help his poor mother!" was the salutation that met her ears. For a woman who had excited nothing but trivial interest

An Unpromising Heroine

in all her long and toilsome life, there was a pitiful pleasure in thus occupying such a position. Besides that, the homely comfort they tried to give was causing a reaction, and before the afternoon had ended she was fully convinced that young Baker would not die, and that Dan's release was merely the matter of a few days.

Mollie could not define the feeling of disgust that crept over her. She loved her mother dearly — but if only those people would stay outside, and leave them to bear their grief in solitude! She stole off into the bedroom, her eyes tearless and shining. Nor did she go to Mass that day — for the curious stares of those who knew her would cause her to sink to earth with shame. Some one told her that Nonie McCabe was at home. What was Nonie McCabe to her now? That was such a trifle — the finding of Nonie McCabe.

What — will — they — do — to — Dan?

Her poor little brain was tortured with visions. That miserable bedroom became, over and over again, a stage on which were enacted Dan's trial and Dan's execution. She pictured Tom Baker's death bed; she saw his face, white and rigid in its last sleep — and then Dan, her brother Dan!

Her fevered brain could bear no more. She covered her eyes with her hands and pressed her elbows close to her thin breast to stifle the moans that would draw unwelcome attention upon her. And it was well, perhaps, that into this loneliness and seclusion there toddled a

An Unpromising Heroine

pair of little feet, that loving baby hands drew those hands down, that a loving baby voice whispered in her ear: —

“Nonie’s so lonesome without her Mollie,” it said. “Poor Nonie got losted without her Mollie. Don’t cry no more, Mollie — Nonie’s come back. Nonie’ll never get losted again.”

* * * * *

Troubles come and joys; troubles go as well as joys. And none who suffer, no matter how deep the pain, and none who rejoice, no matter how overwhelming the delight, can disturb the ordinary course of human events, can evade the call of necessity. Monday morning dawned. Tom Baker’s condition remained unchanged, and the mother of the boy who had struck him was informed that he could not live, that his hours, perhaps his very minutes, were numbered. Down, with a crash, fell the false hopes that had buoyed her up; she faced the inevitable, she realized that her son, her Dan, her darling, was to bear forever upon his forehead the brand of Cain.

The fact that she could not take a single day to nurse her sorrow was but a proof of how close are the cares and duties of life to its greatest tragedies. Daily need called loudly. She was the breadwinner, even she. So she started out upon the weary round of the week again, bearing upon her shoulders a newer and a heavier burden. Her eyes were swollen, her lips were set in a piteous curve, for hers was not a repressed nature, and

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she could not keep back her grief. She did not know how to wear a mask. Very few women like her ever do. Their hearts are in their simple, honest faces, and in the spontaneous giving of their outstretched hands. Dan had been her idol. She had pardoned his faults and tolerated his carelessness with true mother-leniency, than which there is no greater saving God's. His disgrace was more bitter than his death would have been, but even at that, fear for his future swallowed up all other thoughts, so that what was faded into insignificance before what might be. Two of her neighbors were at the door — and she stopped.

“It's a sthrange, bitter world,” she said, making no allusion to her sorrow, knowing they would understand. “A quare world — God help us that have to live in it an' give us strength to do our best.”

They sighed in sympathy, looking after her as she passed on, walking slowly as if each step were painful. Her slight figure seemed shrunken and old. Their faces expressed the deepest concern.

“Poor woman, poor woman, it's mighty hard on her,” said Mrs. McCabe, fully recovered from her own sorrow now that Nonie had been restored to her.

“So 'tis,” said Mrs. Reilly. “But he was a bad boy always — not worth his salt. An' Farrell himself was a miserable head to her, Lord 'a' mercy on him.”

“She's had her own share o' throuble, God help us.”

“She's had that same. 'Tain't over yet.”

“On'y beginnin', seems like.”

An Unpromising Heroine

“Thru, indeed.”

The sallow-faced child who had followed her mother downstairs, moved nearer to them. With the last glimpse of that mother's form, which she gazed after until it was entirely lost to sight, seemed to pass, too, all hope for Dan. She felt alone and useless. She could do nothing, though her poor little heart ached so to be of service to the ones she loved. Seen now in the light of day, Mollie Farrell was unprepossessing — almost forbidding. She was fifteen years old, but no one would imagine so, since in build and in appearance she looked like a child of twelve. That mop of black hair hung habitually down into those elfish eyes, giving her a wild expression. A miserable little creature enough — poor food, poor air, poor surroundings combining to make her repulsive. Mrs. McCabe's unfriendly glance traveled over her from top to toe.

“It's workin' a big girl like you ought to be,” she said, “an' not have that mother o' yours slavin' her fingers to the bone for the two of ye.”

The answer Mollie flung back at her was not the retort courteous. Being in a particularly savage and restless mood, not much was needed to provoke her. Again, she and Mrs. McCabe were natural enemies, with but one ground of neutrality, the little Nonie. She threw all sophism to the winds and faced her.

“'Tisn't a great lot of work *you* ever do!” she said, with trenchant sarcasm. “And no one would have to look at you twice to find it out, either.”

An Unpromising Heroine

Mrs. McCabe flushed. A careless woman was she, with a brood of unkempt youngsters, whose condition seldom varied — excepting only Nonie's, Mollie's particular charge. "As dirty as Timmie McCabe" had passed into proverb. "The clean little McCabe" they called the baby by way of contrast. She turned on the girl now with a very red face.

"G'long, ye thrawneen!" she said. "Ye'll come to a bad end yet — it's in you. As bad an end as your murderin' brother."

"Tut!" cried Mrs. Reilly. "Don't be predictin' things like that to an orphan, woman! 'Tis not the child's fau't that she has a bad brother, an' it ain't nice to be throwin' it up to her. But you *could* try to do more," with a disapproving shake of her head at the girl.

Mollie's answer was a laugh — more insulting than any words. Mrs. Reilly turned away.

"It's a good lickin' you want," asseverated Mrs. McCabe.

"Well," said Mollie, tossing her black mane. "Lots of people are good at layin' down laws —"

"What's this, now, what's this!" cried a voice that startled the three. A tall figure loomed up beside the girl and a hand was placed on her shoulder. "A little thing like you saucing any one older than her? Shame!"

"It's a good specimen she is, docther," said Mrs. McCabe, bobbing and smiling as the young man raised his hat. "But it's on'y what wan may expect. Look at her now, man dear, look at her."

An Unpromising Heroine

She was squirming like an eel in the grasp of the sinewy hand that held her. John Rollinson, who had a remarkably stern face for one so young in years, glanced down at her, — and that searching glance seemed to exasperate her beyond endurance. She ceased struggling and threw her head back, turning on the two women.

“I never said nothing to you! You’re plaguing me to death, both of you! You’re jest dyin’ to tell him what happened to Dan, ain’t you?” She bit the words off savagely, and John Rollinson’s grasp tightened. She looked up at him with a red gleam in her eyes, then. “Dan’s killed Tom Baker,” she said harshly. “Yes, and been took for it. And he’ll get the chair, see if he don’t.”

Poor Mollie! She had put into words at last her terrible fear of what they would do to Dan!

“Good God!” said John Rollinson.

“Indeed, yes, docther!” said Mrs. McCabe. “It’ll break his poor mother’s heart —”

With a sudden twist of her body, Mollie threw herself against the young man, and her mouth came in contact with his thumb. A quick, sharp bite, a hasty exclamation of pain, and she was speeding up the stairs, laughing shrilly as she ran. But the laugh was a sad one in its seeming triumph.

“Would you mind that, Mis’ McCabe!” cried Mrs. Reilly, in an awestruck tone. “She drew the blood on him! I’m afeared, sir, there’s a black dhrup somewhere in them Farrells —”

An Unpromising Heroine

Rollinson took out his handkerchief and wrapped a corner of it about his thumb.

"It's my own fault," he said coolly. "I had no right to detain her against her will. What was that she said? Her brother, what?"

Whereupon, for she had been longing to hear this question, Mrs. McCabe entered upon a lengthy and garbled account of the tragic occurrence. At heart Dan Farrell was not a bad boy — this John Rollinson in his two years' acquaintance with these particular people, had discovered. Impulsive, good-tempered, kind enough in his own way to his little and only sister, who gave him, in return, a fidelity and worship that had helped to spoil him. His round, freckled face, his humorous blue eyes, and his wide mouth always parted in a grin, were safe indexes to his happy-go-lucky disposition. No one who knew him could dream him capable of committing, with intent, the deed of which he was accused.

John Rollinson listened gravely, patiently, as both women volubly raced with each other in their anxiety to get at the telling points.

"Tom Baker never amounted to much, anyway," he said in a thoughtful manner, when Mrs. McCabe finished.

"No, he did not," agreed she at once, scenting which way the young man's sympathies tended.

"'Twas what they had in them done it," said Mrs. Reilly. "Tom said Dan hadn't paid —"

An Unpromising Heroine

“One word led to another,” chimed in Mrs. McCabe.

“An’ out went Dan’s fist and caught him under the ear —”

“An’ down he went, smashin’ the back of his head on the flure —”

“An’ he ain’t expected to live till mornin’ —”

“Now, then, he done it dacint,” capped Mrs. McCabe. “’Twas but the blow of a fist, docther, an’ no dirty dago thricks about him, at all, at all.”

“He was always ready with his fists, was Dan,” said Mrs. Reilly.

“Humph! A little too ready!” said Rollinson. “He’ll find that out to his cost if the fellow dies.”

And without any further comment on the situation he went about his business.

CHAPTER III

WHAT THEY DID TO DAN

MORE than once, during the rest of that long Monday, John Rollinson thought of Dan Farrell and of his friend, Tom Baker—also of Dan Farrell's sister, for his thumb gave him a little trouble. He had no idea, however, that the case he heard Doctors Byrne and Gray discussing was that of the lad he had known, and whose death, now, was really but a question of his surrendering to it.

Monday night started his week of hospital duty, and when he went through the ward, glancing over the charts, he stopped short at the bed nearest the door, around which a screen was drawn. This was Dr. Gray's case, then. With a start he bent over the quiet figure. His acquaintance with Tom Baker dated from the preceding winter, when Tom Baker's mother had suffered a bad attack of pneumonia, and the lad, her only child, had proved himself tender and tireless as a woman in his care of her. John Rollinson had liked the boy from that time on, although he felt that it would take some mighty endeavor to lift him, big and strong as he was, out of his incorrigible shiftlessness.

The pallid countenance turned upward, the unblinking,

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expressionless eyes fastened on the ceiling, the rigidity of the prostrate form — all this the young man noted as he felt his pulse, beginning then to examine him carefully. The nurse too was interested in a professional way, for this “case” was of splendid proportions, strong, physically, as an ox, although the paralysis that chained his limbs now left them supine. It seemed a pity they could do nothing to help him.

“I shall come back again,” said Rollinson, after a few moments’ silent survey. “Will Dr. Gray return?”

“I think he was called away — he said he expected to be,” she answered. “At any rate he will try to be here about nine.”

John Rollinson turned at the foot of the bed once more.

“Nine o’clock?” he said. “He gives him until nine o’clock? Poor fellow, poor fellow!”

He went out into the hall. Two men were seated there — one a detective.

“There’s a chance that Baker may recover consciousness, they tell me, or be able to speak before the end,” he said in answer to Rollinson’s query. “So I’ve brought young Farrell, doc. It will simplify things if he identifies him.”

The white-faced lad beside him did not open his lips.

“I’ve known both of these fellows quite well,” said John Rollinson. “It’s not against any rules if I speak to him?”

“Not at all — speak to him if you like,” was the good-

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natured answer, and the physician took the vacant chair on the other side of the prisoner, and put his hand on his shoulder — a great deal more gently than he had held the recalcitrant Mollie that morning. It was the first friendly touch Dan had felt since he had torn away his mother's clinging fingers and gone with the officers two nights previous. His face worked piteously, but he managed to control his emotion.

“Is it true?” he asked in a hoarse whisper. “Will he die?”

Rollinson nodded.

“Poor chap, I'm afraid he will. I don't see how he's held out this long.”

“God!” said Dan Farrell. “I wouldn't mind if I was in it alone. I ain't no coward, doc. But there's Mollie. An' — an' — mom. It'll kill mom.”

His voice broke over the words — it was plain that for the time being he had no thought of the consequences to himself, and although John Rollinson knew that a whole host of sermons could be preached, and a whole list of morals pointed on this late repentance, it was not John Rollinson's way to preach sermons or point morals — at least, by the vehicle of speech. He said not a word but those of cheer and comfort until he was called to some urgent duty.

Father Laurence of Our Lady of the Angels had made his second visit, administered the last rites, and gone again, his sacred duty performed, before the physician found a chance to return. Through it all Tom

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Baker's lips were sealed. The expression of the eyes had changed, however—perhaps the priest's final and solemn benediction had brought that painful eagerness into them. When Rollinson bent over him this time, he was surprised to see something very much like entreaty in the glance that met his own. He turned the helpless head toward the light. The nurse stood beside them, placidly observing both. She was not accustomed to Rollinson's gentle manner, and she wondered, with some curiosity, how long it would last—how many years it would be ere professional hardness overcame that tenderness toward the suffering. But then she did not know John Rollinson, nor John Rollinson's motives.

“Poor, poor lad!” he said now. “You want something, don't you? What in the world can it be?”

To the surprise of both onlookers, two tears welled slowly down the boy's face.

“You are a Catholic,” said John Rollinson. “Make a heartfelt act of contrition. God will pardon you if you are truly sorry. And forgive your enemies.”

The nurse's eyebrows went up imperceptibly—this was another sidelight on Rollinson's puzzling character. It became plain that the dying boy was making frightful efforts to regain the use of his tongue.

“I wonder,” mused John Rollinson, thoughtfully, his grave eyes fastened on the young face. “Yes—it is possible—maybe—”

He sat down on the chair beside the bed. No

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amount of questioning had been able to elicit signs of intelligence from the stricken lad. When the detective brought Dan Farrell before him, there was not even a glance of interest to betray their acquaintanceship. But now, perhaps the words of the good priest whispered into his ear had broken down the barriers, or perhaps he felt that the dreaded end was coming, despite his dogged determination to fight it off.

“Listen to me, Tom,” said John Rollinson. “You are dying.”

He waited. A gleam shot into the eyes on which his own were fastened so solemnly.

“You are dying, Tom,” went on that voice. “If I, or any human being, could help you, my boy, help would be given. But neither hope nor help is possible. You are dying. If you understand what I am saying to you, close your eyes.”

That unquivering stare met his one moment. Then the lids shut, heavily, slowly, and as was evident, with great difficulty. The physician spoke more loudly.

“Dan Farrell—” at the sound of that name the listening detective came in from the corridor, leading a thin, wiry figure, and Tom Baker heard them coming—“Dan Farrell was your friend, wasn’t he? He stood by you in many a scrape—do you think he was sorry after he struck you?”

The detective looked at John Rollinson curiously. The lids of the dying boy’s eyes wavered, but did not close.

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“You are about to face God,” went on the physician, gravely. “You are going to Him as each one of us must go. Now, as you would answer Him, I want you to answer me. You can’t speak, that I know, but try to follow me —”.

With none too gentle touch the detective pushed Farrell down. The eyes of the friends met. It was pitiful to see the tremendous effort Tom Baker made to speak. And then, to their unbounded surprise, his lips moved.

“’Twan’t your fault, Dan,” he muttered gutturally. “I hit you first — you never meant —”

It was the last flicker of his wonderful strength. John Rollinson stood up. He had scarcely hoped for words, and while they astonished him, the great awe he felt always in the presence of death checked any exhibition of it. He was too true a Catholic, despite his acquaintance with death in all its forms, to feel aught but reverence at the passing of a soul. His lips moved as he prayed for the poor, faulty being, who even at that moment faced his Creator, beyond all human need or human help. Dan Farrell, with a sob that shook him from head to foot, threw himself on his knees, his arms outstretched across that silent form.

“Tom!” he cried in bitter grief. “Oh, Tom, Tom, my poor old pal!”

But his “pal” would never respond to human voice again, and Dan Farrell was led away to his cell in the Tombs.

* * * * *

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Being under twenty-one he was sentenced to the Reformatory at Elmira for a year.

The justice who presided over his case was rather severe, else he might have escaped scot-free after his dead friend's exoneration. As it was, John Rollinson's interest was the prime thing that moved the magistrate to leniency. Voluntarily taking the witness chair, he spoke well of the lad, told of his genial disposition, of his good heart — and the word of this kindly, educated man — only four years older than Dan himself, for all the lines that thought and study had marked upon his face, made quite an impression. Where there is a leader there will always be followers, and a number came forward to substantiate John Rollinson's statements.

Dan stood up to hear his fate. He had been seven months in the Tombs awaiting trial, and his once ruddy face was drawn, and wan with the sickly prison pallor. He did not at all resemble the sturdy fellow who had been handed over to justice in the fall of the preceding year. His blue eyes seemed too large for his boyish face, and they were heavy when they rested on his mother's bowed gray head, and on Mollie, who had never shed a single tear through it all. She only kept silent — and prayed with the fierce passion that was part of her hidden nature. Even Father Laurence, who knew most of his poor children well, did not know how Mollie Farrell prayed — or the things she promised as she prayed.

“An' for the life of me fine lad he on'y got a year!” said Mrs. Baker, with a wail. “The lad that I raised

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an' tended an' slaved an' toiled for, with his father dyin' before he was born! An' then in a minute his life went — snuffed out like a candle. An' his murtherer gets a year!" The fire of madness was in her eyes. "A year! May God —"

"Hush, hush, hush!" cried John Rollinson, sternly — so sternly that the curse she would have uttered died upon her trembling lips. He was sorry for the poor creature, who had indeed toiled hard and eaten bitter bread to bring to manhood that one and only child of hers. But somehow, when he looked at Mollie Farrell, whose black eyes had never left the judge's face during all the time of hearing; whose little fevered lips had been set so tight that her mouth looked like a thin red line; whose nervous hands were clasped, finger over finger, until the veins stood out, he was sorrier still. He felt that here was a grief so great that only silence could contain it.

"Who is worse off?" he asked now, gently. "Who, do you think, is the worse off — you, or the mother and sister of the boy that killed him?"

She turned on him stormily.

"Me, me, Dr. Rollinson, sir! Sure, wasn't his soul sent out of his body without shrift nor shriftin'? Wasn't it? I leave it to you. Arrah, my God, sir, Dan Farrell's soul is safe."

"Is it? You are sure of that? He has his life to live, Mrs. Baker — and your boy's life is over. Wasn't Father Laurence with him? Do you think our Father Laurence would leave him until —"

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“ Ah, but now, sir — with no confession — nor no nothin’ on’y what he med in his own mind ! ” said the woman, sobbing, for the young man’s gentle words opened the wound afresh. “ God grant he’s all right an’ safe in Purgatory — but it was such a short while, sir, for a careless life. He was always that careless, my poor boy, though the best an’ the honestest — You remember it yourself, sir, now, don’t you — how he sat with me day after day an’ night after night when I had the spell o’ sickness two winthers afore last ? Oh, yes, you know, sir — you remember. An’ on’y for him I’d ’a’ had to go to hospital, I would that. But he’s gone . . . ”

* * * * *

The poor mothers, the poor mothers ! They are the ones who suffer most !

* * * * *

The convicted lad was allowed to say farewell to his people. He had been brave through all the months of his imprisonment, and had shown the face of a sphinx at his trial, scorning to betray emotion before any of the police officials. But when this little woman, wearied under the burden of years, crushed to the earth by this last great sorrow, threw her arms about his neck, his bravado left him, and he wept with her.

“ ’Twas a sorrowful day for me the day I bore ye, laddie,” she whispered, mingling her passionate expressions of love with reproachings. “ A sad and sorrowful day, God help us all. An’ what did we do to you, son,

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or agin you, ever, that you should bring this misery and disgrace upon your own? upon your innocent little sister an' meself? Naught like it has ever happened — we were dacint people always, Dannie — ay, fine people were the Phelans in the ould days, an' fair an' plenty they had. God forgive you, Dan, God forgive you.”

“Mother!” sobbed the lad, in agony. “Mother, mother, don't!”

“Ah, then, son, an' I won't. 'Twas all a mistake, I know. 'Twas the bad temper and the provocation, child o' mine, an' the dhrink — an' not the wee laddie that I've loved so! It's you have the good heart, dear. You never would 'a' done it had you been in your right senses. Be a good boy, Dan darlin' — on'y be a good boy — an' come back soon to them that'll be pinin' away for you —”

He could not stand it — the sorrowful, breaking voice, the limp form against his young breast, the faded eyes looking up at him beseechingly. John Rollinson, who had just put the mother of the murdered lad into a neighbor's care, came upon this pathetic scene, and felt his heart ache anew.

“Please, doc,” said Dan, in a shrill voice, “take her out, will you?” He kissed his mother's white face, fiercely. It was Mollie's turn then to say good-by. She put her arms on his two shoulders — and then she drew him down to her and kissed him, once. Her dry lips did not frame a single word, but her gaze held his. What it said to him he could not reach high enough to



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explain, but a new flood of courage spurted through every vein in his body. He straightened up under those clinging fingers; he threw his head up under that silent gaze; he set his lips after she had touched them with her own. It would soon be over. A year? What was a year? And he would come back to prove to every one that he could live this down.

“I will, Mollie,” he said in a strong voice. “I will. Tell mother that I will.”

That was how he left them. His face white, but with that resolute expression hardening every boyish line in it, with the dower of manhood in his erect form and firm step. Mollie watched him go. When the door closed behind him, she turned to John Rollinson.

“Let me have my mother now,” she said.

CHAPTER IV

“NOT A JUDGMENT—”

IT was over. There was no further excitement or notoriety to be derived from the fact that Dan Farrell had killed his “pal” in a brawl. Most of the interest in the case, truth to tell, had died out months before, and people were inclined to criticise or to blame the mothers of both lads, saying that it was their indulgence that had ruined those two young lives.

If so, Mrs. Farrell suffered for her share in it. John Rollinson attended her for many weeks afterward. She had begun to ail from the day that Tom Baker died, but Dan’s trial and sentence broke her down utterly. When she recovered from the severe attack of illness that followed upon that parting scene, it was with an affection of the heart that not only rendered and would render her an invalid, more or less, for the rest of her life, but debarred her from laborious tasks. In the hand-to-mouth existence which most of our poor are forced to live, provision for the future is entirely out of the question, even if there should chance to be a small surplus above necessity, which is seldom the case. Mrs. Farrell had never dreamed of the day when her usefulness and her ability to earn the little she did would cease. But

“Not a Judgment —”

that day had come. And she did not care. Dan's fate had taken away all ambition. She was proud with the sturdy pride of a family who had always had “clean hands,” who had wronged no man willingly, and held up their heads with the “best” people ere poverty spelled a lowering in the social scale. The boy had been her idol. She had given him that wonderful affection that mothers in every rank of life give to their sons — and which, alas! many of those sons fail to appreciate until the mother-heart is silenced forever.

John Rollinson called to see her one afternoon, as usual. Medicine, at this juncture, was useless, and the good food and change of air she sorely needed were beyond her means.

“Poorly again, Mrs. Farrell?” he asked in his cheerful voice.

“Oh, no, sir — no, indeed, sir,” she answered, smiling at him wearily. “Not a bit of pain have I — on'y tired — so tired that I don't want to lift one hand above the other.”

He shook his head.

“Well, now,” he said, “and how does it feel to be tired? It's a luxury for you, Mrs. Farrell — you've worked so hard all your life. But never mind, we must get rid of it at that, even if it is a luxury. Let me see — you should have —”

He paused. He knew the sensitiveness of his people, and his consideration for their natural pride often placed him in embarrassing situations.

“Not a Judgment —”

“I should have lots of things,” she finished for him. “That’s throe, docther, that’s throe. I know it. But there’s no money as it is, and with no prospects —”

She faltered a little over the next words : —

“ ’Twill be the almshouse, maybe.”

The expressive gesture of her hands completed the sentence. Much disturbed, John Rollinson stared straight before him. He was silent, thinking deeply for at least ten seconds. Then he realized that he was meeting, squarely, a pair of black eyes, and he returned their gaze with interest. He saw below the surface — it was not the first time that he had been made to feel that there was something wonderful about those eyes, and that drawn, unlovely face — some superb and hidden strength.

“You can’t talk like that,” he said now. “There is no such fate in store for you. Dan will be home in less than a year if his conduct is good, and Mollie — well, Mollie must do something.”

Since his kindness to Dan the girl had treated him with a shy gratitude that touched him. He had discovered much in her that no one else ever dreamed of, and he knew that until his last hour he would remember that scene between her and her brother. She puzzled him. But even as he spoke now he felt how small and fragile she was to cast out into the struggle for her daily bread.

“I’ve — tried,” she answered him briefly, for she was seldom one of much speech. “I get — promises. They’re cheap.”

“Why, so they are. Meanwhile —”

“Not a Judgment —”

He slipped his hand into his pocket, suggestively. A faint flush rose to the mother's cheeks, and a spasm contracted her mouth. It had come to — *this?* Mollie merely looked at him. That was all. His fine face colored; he drew out his hand again, empty. Her eyes drooped and she turned away.

* * * * *

This Mollie Farrell had always fought her own battles, hard enough battles, too, but hardest of all with herself. She did not know that she had fantastic imagination, independence, great self-will. She understood that she was different from the girls with whom she came in contact, because her mother had often asked God audibly in her presence why He had afflicted her with so queer a daughter. She would never be like them, she knew — she was too silent and morose to make friends, and they had no time to waste on so unsatisfactory a being. For unsatisfactory to them and trying to her mother she certainly was.

Yet her home had been comparatively happy, and her life sheltered. She had never “faced the world,” as her mother told her, or known the severer rebuffs of life. Perhaps the poor mother, facing and knowing both, had tried to keep her daughter from the bitterness thereof as long as she could possibly do so. Because of this, Mollie Farrell lived in a self-centered little planet of her own, a selfish world of her own, peopled by wonderful men and women, who were always performing heroic deeds and moving in stupendous tragedies. And now

“Not a Judgment —”

she had to step out of it — she had to cross the dividing line.

“I *must* be good for something,” she said to herself the day after that scene occurred between her mother and John Rollinson. “I *must* be. There is surely something somewhere in the world that I can do better than anybody else. Why can’t I find out what it is?”

She was sitting at the little deal table which was placed at one end of the room, resting her elbows on it, with her chin sunk into her palms.

“I ain’t pretty,” she went on mentally. “I’m nomely, I am. My skin don’t shine like Katie Morrissey’s, and my eyes ain’t bright — just big black things, lookin’ as if they were made for some one else and thrown at me by mistake.” She covered them quickly with her hands. “Why weren’t you smaller, you black things, and blue like Dan’s — or like Dr. Rollinson’s?”

It was the parting of the ways for Mollie Farrell. She took her hands down and gave her hair a savage pull.

“Look at it!” she said. “A dusty black — black, black like my eyes! Oh, Mollie Farrell, what were you born for anyhow?”

She could not answer the question. Her chin drooped forward on her palms once more.

“What were you born for?” she asked again. “With your ugly face and hair and eyes? You can’t do anything right — nothing. You can only say mean things

“Not a Judgment — ”

when people try to be kind to you. You don't know anything — that's it.”

Her somber eyes contracted.

“Don't know where you're going to learn,” she said. “Don't know how. But you've got to, that's all. Sure as you're sitting here, Mollie Farrell, you've got to learn.”

Her mother, too used to Mollie's silences to observe this one, was reclining in a chair at the window, staring wearily down into the street. Mollie got up from the table and went to her, and she raised her eyes. They were dim with tears.

“No prospects, daughtie,” she said. “No prospects, an' me with nothin' the matter with me that one can see — on'y not able to raise my hand. God knows I never thought much of hard work, daughtie.”

“No, ma'am,” said Mollie.

“An' my fine, big boy, that could take care o' me an' you, away with murtherin' vagabones an' thieves an' the ike! 'Twas cruel lines on the lad that he didn't die when he was a baby.”

She rocked herself to and fro.

“Cruel, cruel lines, if it be God's holy will,” she went on. “One time, indeed, the breath was gone from his little body, when he was sick with the diphtheria, an' I do remember that I thrun meself across his bed, an' cried to God to spare him, my on'y one, for 'twas three years afther that you kem, Mollie, an' Dan was my on'y comfort. Your dad, Lord 'a' mercy on

“Not a Judgment —”

him — Well, God forgive Martin Farrell, Mary, for the way he threated me, though he was a fine man an' a good man in the days I knew him first.”

The tears were streaming down her face. She let them fall unchecked.

“My little lad that has another man's blood on his hands now was all I had in them days an' afterward — the bitter, black days that kem after you were born. His chubby little face, an' his blue eyes, an' the curly yellow hair of him! May God's holy will be done!”

Mollie, the self-repressed, put her arms about her mother.

“Don't cry, mother,” she said. “Oh, *don't* cry.” She pressed her cheek against the gray head. “Don't cry, mother, don't cry, don't cry,” she whispered.

“When you kem, it meant more throuble still for me. Your father — Oh, but he swore at the sight of you — peaked, miserable little mite! He liked Dan well enough — but your big black eyes scared him so. They were twice as big when you were little. You seemed born for his torment, so you did, though you were only an innocent baby. He dhrank an' dhrank after that until nothin' could save him —”

“Mother!” said Mollie, breathing quickly, as if suffering, “I don't know what I was born for — and it seems as if you don't, either. But I'm going to find out. Dan's gone, and you're sick, and I don't look good for much, I'm that thin. It's something that's inside of me

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that burns all the flesh away. But there's a place for me and there's work for me.”

“God grant!” murmured the mother.

“There's a place for me. I can't talk grand and fine and I'm nothing to look at. Ain't been to school — don't know nothing at all. But ” — she set her teeth grimly — “I'll learn.”

“Amen,” said the mother, slightly awed at the vehemence in the girl's tones. She had never heard her talk so much before.

“'Twas a hard struggle to get along,” she interjected. “An' you were that headstrong, always, child. You wouldn't go to school, an' no one could mek you do a thing you didn't want to.”

“I ain't blaming you, mom, am I? It's my own fault — and from now on I'm going to take care, and be as nice as nice.” There was such pleading childishness under that firm voice — such a beseeching ring. “It'll be terrible hard, but I'm *jest* going to do it. Only, mom, *where* did I get this mop of rusty black hair? And who gave me these eyes that stare out and annoy every one?”

“I dunno, Mollie,” answered the mother. “They ain't natural, that's sure. No one of the Farrells ever looked like you — an' the Phelans, my own people, were all fine an' straight an' handsome. I always thought them eyes a judgment on Farrell himself — I always thought it — he was so scared of you.”

“Oh, no!” said Mollie, in a trembling voice. “Don't

“Not a Judgment —”

say that, mom. God wouldn't do that. God wouldn't 'a' put me here jest for a judgment, mom; God wouldn't, I tell you!” Her tones were shrill, her breast began to heave. “God wouldn't say that's all the use I have for her is to put her there for a judgment, 'cause her father is bad to her mother and is a drunkard. Oh, mom, how you frightened me!”

She slid to the floor, her arms still about her mother, but clinging to her now, as a child clings, for protection. She was shivering through all her little form.

“Oh, mom, it's for something else — it's for some good. Dan's gone, but I'm here, and I can take care of you. I can take care of you and I will. I'm afraid of nothing — only don't say I'm for a judgment.”

“I'll say you're for a blessing, Mollie, if you'll be like the rest of the girls. Why don't you act natural! There's Katie Morrissey'd be glad to go with you, an she's such a gentle an' soft-spoken an' good-livin' little soul. It's not right, the way you are, snarlin' an' snap-pin' at people that mean ne'er a bit o' harm. God knows it's a poor day when I'd think o' taking charity, an' I'm glad he didn't give it, but yestiddy — on'y yestiddy — when you stood an' looked so at Dr. Rollinson, an' him thryin' his best to befriend us! I could 'most 'a' died, Mollie, with shame, when he got that red an' flustered iike.”

“Oh!” said Mollie. “Was it very nasty, mom? I didn't mean it, and he is so good.”

“It was nasty,” said Mrs. Farrell.

“Not a Judgment —”

“But, mom, we don’t want money from him. That would be a shame — you wouldn’t want him to give us *money*, mom, or anything — like that?”

“No, child, I wouldn’t. Yet I’d hate to hurt his feelings.”

“I’m sorry, mom.”

“You can well say it,” said Mrs. Farrell. “You can well say you’re sorry. An’ if you thry, Mollie, yes, if you thry, you can be nice. As nice as Katie Morrissey On’y thry, daughtie.”

CHAPTER V

“— BUT A BLESSING ”

JOHAN ROLLINSON was a young man to be so far advanced in his professional career. But he had taken up the study of medicine very early, throwing himself into it with an ardor that precluded all doubt of its being anything but the life work for which he was naturally inclined. He had devoted all his days and many of his nights to it, and he took a keen pleasure in the duties involved.

At first the idea had come to him because of an invalid father who had also been mother to him almost from his birth. For years he was the older man's companion and nurse as well as loving son, and during the latter part of Horace Rollinson's life the skill of the physician had done much to alleviate the pain which he endured. When the end came, the father, dying, impressed upon his son, what living, he had instilled into his daily life.

“When there's a word to say that will help, or a dollar to give, my boy, say the word for your father's sake and in giving remember that you are only a trustee of the wealth you possess. I was not as good at your age as you are now — I was haughty and insolent in my

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young manhood. I have tried to atone—tried to do my best for humanity at large, John, but now that I am dying my efforts seem dwarfed when contrasted with my one great sin. Twenty years it is since I spoke my last harsh word. Twenty years since I drove your mother away from you, and you were only a little thing. But I was cruel to her—to that loving slip of a girl.

“They say wealth buys everything, but it has not found her for me, though I have spent it like water. Wherever she went, or whatever she did, I know her heart broke the night she left us. So be good to the poor you meet for your mother’s sake—she was one of them, one of the people. She may, for all I know, be among them.”

Horace Rollinson had been dead four years now, but his son had not forgotten those words, nor was he likely ever to forget them. Fully two thirds of those on his visiting list were what the world calls “charity patients” and whom John Rollinson called “his people.” The pastor of Our Lady of the Angels knew that he was one with him—spiritually and physically. They tried to heal together. The income he received lifted him above pecuniary considerations, and his skill made him invaluable. In every poor woman he met—knowing his father’s story—he saw his mother and treated her as such. It was this gentleness, this kindness, this familiarity with their trials, that so endeared him to them all. They needed him and he gave himself. He loved them with the humanitarianism that is the God-given

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gift to a noble soul. He was sorry for them. They might be proud, they might be envious, they might be patterns of all the virtues, or examples of vice, they might be wonderful in their patience, or contemptible in their meannesses — but they were never, never ungrateful, admitting him always to the bosom of their kind regard. And in return his affection was almost paternal.

The interest he took in the Farrells now was not one whit more pronounced than that which he took in a dozen other families, saving, perhaps, the girl, Mollie. He had not noticed her before Dan's misfortune, but suddenly from that time, she stood out from the crowd — a pitiable figure enough, but one with individuality. Her eyes, when she fastened them so intently on his face, spoke of a hundred things that the undisciplined brain could not put into words.

“She has the soul of a Joan of Arc,” he said to himself that day in the courthouse. “I can see her martyr soul — see it in every line of her face.”

She had avoided him with a persistency that was remarkable. Used to deference, at first he misunderstood the sullen manner of the child until he realized its meaning. He discovered, as if by an instinct, that her pride and independence were fighting with the gratitude she felt toward him for his kindness to her beloved brother. After that he brought all the attraction of his winning manner to bear upon her, striving to gain her confidence, thinking more of that swift, half-wild, wholly

“— But a Blessing”

timid glance of hers than of all the words that fell so easily from her mother's lips.

“Mollie's goin' to work,” Mrs. Farrell told him, on the occasion of his next visit. “I don't know how long 'twill last, but she's goin'. An’,” she added as if by an afterthought, “I gave it to her for the way she has when she talks to you, she's that uncivilized.”

“Tut, tut, tut!” exclaimed John Rollinson, frowning. “That was too bad of you, Mrs. Farrell. I want to be Mollie's friend. I can't if she dislikes me.”

“Dislikes you? Dislikes you, did you say? Why, the child loves the very ground you walk on.”

Which extravagant assertion brought a smile to his lips. He doubted it.

“Well,” he said, “and so she's going to work? At what? Where?”

“She hasn't said. But she's med up her mind.”

He laughed outright this time. These words were the keynote of the girl's character.

“Poor little Joan of Arc,” he murmured.

In the hall he met Mollie herself. She looked neater and cleaner than he had ever noticed her before. She had actually tried to smooth the black hair into some semblance of order, but it rose fuzzily at the temples and fell softly over her ears.

“Hello, little girl!” he said, laughing down at her. “How are you?”

“All right, thank you, sir,” she said. She had a frank manner at times—the manner of a very young

“—But a Blessing”

and innocent child. “Mom says I was not nice to you the other day, Dr. Rollinson. I have made up my mind since then not to be nasty to no one no more. You won’t mind that one time, will you?”

Now he knew Mollie, and he knew that she said no idle word.

“My dear,” he began, and stopped short. Then — “You weren’t ‘nasty’ to me, as you put it. Don’t blame yourself. But I — I didn’t intend it for charity, Mollie.”

He was excusing himself to this insignificant child!

“Thank you,” she answered.

“Your mother tells me you are going to work,” he continued. “Do you know where — have you any idea at what?”

“Yes, sir. I went to the big stores and one took me on, and I’m going to-morrow.”

“That’s splendid,” he said, elated at her confidence. “Only for the holidays, I suppose?”

“They told me that,” said Mollie, “but I’ll be kept after the holidays. I said to myself that I would, and I keep saying it over and over and over. You’ll see I’ll be kept.”

“I hope so, child.”

He stood then, looking at her thoughtfully. Her persistence, her determination, had given him an idea and he followed its promptings. “Are you very anxious to go to work, Mollie?”

She met his eyes frankly.

“—But a Blessing”

“I don’t know, sir. You see it’s something new to meet people — and — and talk to them.” She shivered slightly. “I—I don’t like to talk to people. But there’s — mom. I’m very ignorant, I know, yet p’raps when I see the way other folks do things, I’ll learn, too.”

“That’s it — you don’t know. Wouldn’t you rather go to school? Suppose, now, that you let me take care of your mother for you and send you to a good school, where you can learn all that is so necessary to a poor little girl who must fight her own battles? Wouldn’t you like to study hard, and grow up into an accomplished young lady — ”

“Dr. Rollinson, don’t, please don’t ! ”

“My child, I give you my word of honor to keep account of every penny, so that you can pay me back — and you *could* pay me back, I know it. And I would take it from you, Mollie — yes, child, I would, I promise you. It will cost so little and it means so much to you — ”

“I know, I know ! ” She leaned against the wall, her breath coming fast, her eyes shining. “It means an awful lot, Dr. Rollinson. . . . God must be like you — so kind and so good. . . . I thank you, but you’ve done enough. I don’t want you to do no more.”

“Good heavens, Mollie,” in a vexed tone, “what have I done ? Nothing — nothing at all.”

She straightened up.

“Let me manage by my own self,” she pleaded. “I’ll

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do everything by my own self. There's a place for me and I'm going to find it without any one else's help. I told mom that. I told mom to say nothing to me, but to watch me. To jest let me alone, and watch what I would do for her. Mom said, you know, that I was for a judgment — ”

She lifted her eyes and the glance was full of a wistfulness that showed how the words rankled. “ There's no such thing, is there ? ”

“ A judgment ? ” He was puzzled. “ For what ? On whom ? ”

“ On father. You see — ”

She paused, conscious that she was saying aloud the thoughts that surged within her — and to a stranger. He understood, but he was too interested to let her stop.

“ Am I not your friend, Mollie ? ” he asked very quietly. “ Go on. ”

“ He — he was bad to mom, you know, and after I was born he got worse and worse all the time until he died, because I used to frighten him, staring at him. And mom says she always thought I was for a judgment. ”

Overwhelming pity stirred the young man's heart.

“ No, ” he said solemnly, “ that is not true. God put every one of us here on this earth for some wise purpose of His own — some wise purpose, Mollie. As He made you, He made me. We are all fashioned of the same clay, the only difference between us being that which the world creates. To God your soul and my soul are the same. Remember that always, Mollie. I

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want to help you to be something in the world if you will permit it; there's no such thing as a judgment like that, Mollie. God is too loving and too just. Don't you worry, little girl.”

“I won't,” she said. She put up her hot hand and caught his where it rested on her arm. “I won't, and I thank you again, Dr. Rollinson.” That wondrous glow suffused her face. “I've been trying to tell myself that —jest what you've said, but I can't say it like you. Some day I'll be able to say it like you, only nicer, even, because it will be about my own self and come right from the bottom of my heart. Don't be mad at me that I won't let you do any more than you have done. Not a judgment am I going to be, but a blessing, and through my own self. Through my own self.”

She dropped his hand quickly and ran away from him, leaving him standing there alone.

“By Jove!” he said, under his breath. It was fully a minute before he recovered himself sufficiently to go on down the stairs. Again and again that day his thoughts went back to her. “Not a judgment am I going to be, but a blessing!” He felt the hot clasp of her fingers, and saw the passionate determination on her face. “By Jove!” he said many times, for he could not put the memory away from him.

Years afterward he had occasion to prove those words to his own happiness — but he never forgot them. Often and often his nerves tingled at the memory of that firm, childish voice and the glowing light in her eyes.

“—But a Blessing”

“A judgment, poor little girl, a judgment!” he said again and again. “What a bitter thought for one so young. God keep her. God make her a blessing wherever she may go.”

* * * * *

He saw her only once or twice after that. The weeks ran into months, the months into a year; the year to two and three and four. He knew, however, that her will was conquering. He knew that she was succeeding. Dan Farrell came home, stayed home idly for some months, then disappeared. Nor was the disappearance to his discredit, evidently, for the mother, though tearful, seemed happy enough when speaking of him. No one knew where he had gone, and she gave no inkling of his whereabouts.

And if, after a time, the memory of Mollie became less keen, when John Rollinson heard of a noble deed or worthy action, or needed an incentive to self-sacrifice, he thought of that little “Joan of Arc”—of the little passionate child who had rejected his favors and won his admiration on that bygone day.

So passed Mollie from girlhood into womanhood.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN ROLLINSON, HIS FRIENDS, AND SOME OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

IT was Edith Selleck's day "at home," and little as John Rollinson cared for entertainments of this description, Edith Selleck was the daughter of a man whom he esteemed highly, and this man's younger brother was his best friend. So he went to her "at homes," meeting Mac Selleck there, as a general rule, and carrying him off with him.

"Thursdays from two-thirty until four o'clock," read the dainty card — meant only for her casual acquaintances. Her hospitality was most thoroughly appreciated by those of her friends who stayed the delightful hour after four. John Rollinson had never been one of these, even though he and her uncle were on such intimate terms, for Miss Edith made no advances, being a little in awe of his serious manner, since he was seldom at his best in society. In fact, no one saw him at his best but Mac, and, when occasion warranted, "his people."

So he repelled Edith Selleck by that manner, as all light, bright things are repelled by silence or gravity, nor was she able to discern the flicker of sunshine that dissipated the thoughtfulness of his face at times. He never

John Rollinson

became jocular, and she mimicked his solemnity, asking Mac if he ever laughed, or if anything in the world could cause him to unbend.

Yet she was most punctilious in her conduct ; if he missed a Thursday, she made inquiries, and when he came, she greeted him even more warmly, feeling that he must have few pleasures in life, and that for Mac's sake she must be nice to him.

“Oh, how sensible he is!” she said to Mac, wrinkling her nose, “and how proper and decorous and grave ! If I could only get behind him, Mac, and *shake* him, *hard* ! He is so *stiff* ! I feel childish and of no consequence when he comes down out of the clouds and talks to me ! I immediately want to put my finger in my mouth and grab at my braid as I used to do some years ago.”

Her uncle — it seemed absurd to call him that, he was so near her own age, and, in fact, Edith never could think of him as holding such a relationship, since they had been brought up together almost from her babyhood — looked at her now and laughed. The next moment his face was all earnestness.

“How can you feel so, Edith ? I guess you don't understand him. He's no trifler — not the sort of a fellow the girls in his set — you, for instance, will rave about, but if you think him *stiff* ! Lord, I wish you could see him with those little youngsters on the East Side ! I wish you could see how their mothers worship him ! I've only been with him once — and then I got

John Rollinson

the chance by accident — he couldn't shake me. He's as big a kid with kids as any man can be."

Edith frowned at the slang, but the speech impressed her. She was an impulsive, affectionate, light-hearted girl — inclined to be artificial, but with enough of the woman in her to be interested in such an anomaly as Mac presented now. That this grave young man could unbend, made her wish, indeed, to have him unbend with her. And she liked the fact that he was kind to children.

So when, the following Thursday, John Rollinson rose to go after his duty call of ten minutes, she looked up at him with all the earnestness that her soft gray eyes could express.

"Mac has promised to be back in a few moments," she said, "and the rest will leave soon. Won't you stay a little longer? Miss Cairns will remain, and Mrs. Ridpath, and we can have a half-hour's conversation with sundry cups of tea interspersed between the periods — or commas, if you wish. Intellectual badi-nage, Mac calls it. I know you will like Mrs. Ridpath, she is so sensible and — so settled down."

There was a mischievous flash in her eye, and a most bewitching dimple trembled in one cheek. Alas, for eyes and dimple! John Rollinson saw neither. He was confused at this invitation, especially as he had an engagement. So he hesitated.

"I should like to stay very much," he said. "But you see —"

John Rollinson

“I *beg* your pardon,” hastily. The gleam went out of her eyes, and a mask of ice seemed to freeze the cordiality of the pretty face into the most fashionable unconcern. “I forgot, for the time, that you were a professional man, and that duties might intervene. And you *must* go? So sorry.”

Now, John Rollinson was not altogether obtuse, and Edith’s manner conveyed very plainly the displeasure she felt. When he met Mac Selleck next day, he mentioned the occurrence.

“I do hope Miss Edith was not offended, Mac,” he said. “I should hate to do or say anything she didn’t like.”

Mac laughed.

“So should I,” he confessed naively. “Tell me how you think you displeased the lady?”

John Rollinson did so. Mac gave him a quizzical glance; there was nothing in Rollinson’s face but slight concern.

“You see, John, Edith’s pretty, and a good deal spoiled,” he said then, “but there’s no sham about her, and when she says anything, she’s apt to mean it.”

“Always?” asked Rollinson.

“Occasionally always,” replied Mac. “The prettiest girl I’ve ever met, if her old father happens to have me for a young brother. Good luck is poured out on some people in this world—think of having a daughter like Edith and a brother like me!”

“Wonderful,” said Rollinson. “Especially—the brother.”

John Rollinson

“The prettiest girl I ever met, if she *is* a relative—who doesn’t give a snap of her fingers for any fellow she knows. If she’d asked the others, they’d have jumped at the chance. But you — refused.”

“I did not, Mac. I merely said — ”

“You hesitated. So much the worse. We’ve been friends a long time, old fellow. You know me and I know you. Gregory knows you and likes you. You like him. Can you listen to a few moments’ serious conversation?”

“Serious conversation is scarcely in your line. Still — ”

“Why don’t you and Edith hit it off?”

“Why — don’t — I — and — Edith — hit — it — off?” John Rollinson stared. “You mean — ”

“The thing struck me forcibly this last couple of weeks,” went on this cheerful usurper of a woman’s dearest privilege. “I want to be frank with you. You’re twenty-eight now — almost thirty, remember, and it’s time you married. And there’s Edith — twenty-three — pretty as a picture, lovable — and if you make up your mind, old man, she’ll like you. Why don’t you try? Any girl would be interested in you,” clapping him on the back, “and you’d have me for an uncle. Get busy.”

John Rollinson stood up. He did not smile — his face lost none of its gravity.

“Don’t, Mac, don’t,” he said; “don’t bring her name into a conversation like this — it’s positively

John Rollinson

indecent. She's too good and sweet a girl to have us even hint at such a thing. Why, I can't begin to consider matrimony yet — it's too sacred a subject with us Catholics — in fact," he was much confused, "I can't think of it at all. You know all about me, Mac — you're the only one living who does, and you know the romance and the tragedy of my father's life. He met my mother in an office downtown, employed with hundreds of other girls. She was the one woman in the world for him after his first glimpse of her. It was her beautiful face that took his fancy, for she hadn't even an average education. You can imagine the result. He had no religion then to speak of, but he would have promised anything to get her — and he kept his promises; for I am a Catholic, and he died one for my mother's sake. Just as soon as the first of his liking wore off, he grew tired. She stood it for a while, but when I was only a few months old, she went away from the two of us, leaving the most pathetic, most heart-broken little letter ever penned by a woman's hand. We never found her. If she's alive or dead, I do not know. And until I do, I must not think of home ties or of a wife."

"I don't see it," said Mac Selleck. "This much rest assured of — once you meet the girl you love, you cannot take this stand. It will be impossible."

"And why? Could I be happy with a duty unfulfilled?"

"Your old duty, then, would be superseded by the new — and the new duty will be to the girl. For in

John Rollinson

love especially, it is written that he who doctors himself has a fool for a patient."

"I don't agree with you, Mac."

"What of it! Disagreements make life interesting."

"Mac," said John Rollinson, irrelevantly, "did you ever think that people go through this world strangers to themselves?"

Mac, the careless, twisted in his chair. The earnestness in that slow voice touched a chord somewhere in his happy nature.

"Strangers," repeated John Rollinson. "I've read a lot. I'm supposed to know more than the ordinary fellow. My calling brings me into proximity with all of life's phases — its follies, its vices, and its virtues."

"Yes," said Mac.

"Well, then," said Rollinson, "I am satisfied with myself. I know — myself. I know what to avoid and how to avoid it. My temperament is a calm one, not given to extremes of joy or sorrow; I am free from unnecessary emotional influences; I am well balanced."

"Extremely so," said Mac. "Phlegmatic is a better word."

"There are a number of men like me."

"This world is made up of ordinary human beings," mused Mac.

"There are many like me, well-balanced, reasoning men like me, in this world."

"I trust there are," said Mac.

"Satisfied with their own lot; drifting along in the

John Rollinson

easy content of their present existence; doing what comes to hand to do; marrying—living happily and unhappily; dying; satisfied, I tell you; placid. Good enough in their own way—good in the eyes of the world, good in the eyes of God, I hope, since they try to do their duty.”

And then he stopped talking. Mac waited. Nothing further came.

“What’s the answer, John?” he asked—but the curious note in his voice belied the flippancy of his words. Rollinson turned his head.

“What’s the answer?” he repeated dreamily. “I shall tell you, Mac, when the veil is drawn. My soul is covered up. It is a blessed possession, but I am a stranger to it.”

“And when,” asked Mac, “will you be made acquainted?”

Rollinson laughed.

“You never have to ask a man that question; you know it. Some tell it to the world, and the world calls them heroes. Sometimes, as I have said, it never comes. Perhaps I am not good enough. It’s rather hard for a soul to struggle along, and make any head-way, hampered with the follies it is led into by evil inclinations.”

Mac shrugged his shoulders.

“When people praise my brother Gregory, he quotes a philosopher whom I shall quote to you: ‘If the best man’s faults were written on his forehead, he’d have

John Rollinson

to wear his hat well down over his eyes.' Do not despair."

* * * * *

Being in a confidential mood some nights later Mac recounted most of the conversation to Edith — excepting that part in which her name had been mentioned, for Mac knew when discretion was the better part of valor. She was deeply interested, for now she saw John Rollinson through a romantic haze. The color flashed into her face.

"Poor chap, how hard it must be on him!" she said.

Mac looked at her thoughtfully — then the conversation went off to other things, and not until Mac was leaving to go to his room did Edith bring up his friend's name. He had his hand on the doorknob when she called to him.

"Tell Dr. Rollinson to come to see me professionally an afternoon this week," she said. "I am so nervous lately — I suppose I'll have to consult some one and I just hate old Dr. Bering."

"All right," said Mac. "Only say — don't you think that John goes around ready to talk to every one about such things. He's as aggravating, sometimes, as a disappointed sneeze."

She smiled at him over the top of her chair.

"That's a simile! All your own, Mac?"

"All my own — coined to suit John Rollinson."

"Poor fellow!" And then in a soft voice — a

John Rollinson

voice with a ripple of merriment in it, "Don't worry about your John Rollinson — and me. I can handle him, as you say, with gloves."

Mac walked along the hall to his own room, whistling under his breath. His face was a study.

"It would be mighty funny, if Edith —"

He chuckled.

"Edith isn't what she is for *nothing*," he said. "Jingo, wouldn't I like to see her and John married!" And then he shook his fist vigorously under his own nose. "If this keeps on, you'll have to get out a match-maker's license. Quit it, idiot — you're making a donkey of yourself. But say, it would be *all right*, that's straight."

* * * * *

So John Rollinson found himself, one pleasant afternoon later in the week, alone with Edith Selleck. He would have had to be more than human not to take pleasure in watching her. Perhaps that recent conversation with his friend had quickened his perception a bit; he found himself acknowledging that she was all Mac claimed her to be. For one of the few times in his life the young man forgot duty, paying homage to her charms with his whole attention, listening to every word she said with evident delight. He awoke with a start.

"I believe Mac said you had not been well. What's the matter?"

"A little nervousness, I think," she answered, some-

John Rollinson

what taken aback at the way in which the amused smile left his face, and the professional gravity came into it. He held her wrist in his strong fingers. It was such a dainty wrist, and the hand was perfection. It was the hand of one who did not know the meaning of the word "toil"; it was the sort of hand that John Rollinson seldom touched. But with all its beauty he let it go just as gravely as he had picked it up, and, after some further questioning, looked at her, she knew, as he would have looked at any ordinary patient.

"Your digestion is impaired," he said. "You have been out too late at night and you sleep too late in the morning. You hardly need medicine. Give this up and go away for a while."

"Go away!" cried Edith Selleck, with a gasp. "And the season just started! Don't be absurd, Dr. Rollinson!"

He laughed dryly.

"Is it absurdity? The best thing in the world for you. You have a splendid constitution, Miss Edith. Don't spoil it."

"I don't see how I can. I am very careful. I don't exert myself —"

"That's true. You don't — at the right time. You should get out with the sun and take a bracing walk. Your father ought to send you to —"

"Dr. Rollinson!" She sprang up. "Think of telling my father that you have been here professionally! Why, he'd pack me off without a question — or make

John Rollinson

my life miserable until I went away myself. Oh, you have no idea how *stern* father can be at times!" She smiled, and shook her pretty head in a way that would scarcely convince any one of the sternness of the gentleman in question. "How perfectly absurd!" She perched once more on the arm of the chair with the grace and freedom of a well-loved child. "Let me tell you a secret," she went on. "Father, at my heartfelt solicitation, and after colossal difficulty in securing it, has just expended a most *frightful* sum for a box at the opera." She looked at him triumphantly. "After that, you *can't* be hard-hearted."

John Rollinson laughed. He saw now one of the reasons why Mac loved her so dearly.

"If you dance all night and eat late suppers, you'll have to give up sooner or later, Miss Edith. You want to come down with my people a bit, and learn how good digestion waits on appetite. Most all the trouble with you fashionable folk lies in the stomach. You eat too much."

Miss Edith wrinkled her pretty little nose. It was so vulgar to have one's stomach mentioned. He really, honestly, didn't have a particle of romance in him, no matter what Mac said!

"I'm afraid you think only of your poor people," she began petulantly. "From what Mac tells me, you most live among them."

"I do virtually. I know all their little sorrows and joys and share in them with the sort of enthusiasm that Father Laurence does. You don't happen to know

John Rollinson

Father Laurence of Our Lady of the Angels? A splendid man, a fine fellow."

"He is stupid," thought Edith Selleck, "positively stupid, until you talk poverty to him." Aloud she said, "I do not know any Catholic priests, nor have I any acquaintance among the poor. They would take what I have to give with outstretched, greedy hands, and I should be nothing, not even a memory, when my gift was consumed. In my eyes the office of almoner has always been a thankless one."

She spoke coldly. This from the daughter of Gregory Selleck, one of the noblest, best-hearted, most charitable men that ever breathed! Rollinson felt as if he had been personally insulted.

"My people are not beggars," he said. "They have hard lives, but they are as proud as they can be — fearfully proud, some of them. I am sorry you do not know *my* people. You would not talk like that."

Her mood changed. She looked at him with real interest now, he spoke in such a hurt tone.

"You must be so content, so satisfied," she said. "You have some great object in life."

But John Rollinson would not encourage any such conversation as this.

"Nonsense!" he chided. "You have enough to do — your mission is to make the ones who care for you happy. In my opinion we have too many who help to lower the poor by making them the recipients of a useless charity."

John Rollinson

“Is this a new idea?” asked Edith Selleck.

If it was her intention to try to beguile John Rollinson into a discussion, she failed, for he rose at once.

“No,” he said. “I have been here so long that you must be tired of me. I shall call in to see you again within a week. Remember, it will be your own fault if the air of New York does not agree with you.”

“That is a threat, isn’t it? I shall try to be good.”

She knew, with a woman’s intuition in such matters, that she was as far away from this man’s interest as any casual acquaintance he possessed might be. But she resolved, also, with a woman’s inborn wish to reach out for things denied to her, to make him care. So she stood, smiling up into his eyes, very sweet and very young, and very desirable, indeed. What she would do with him when he acknowledged her spell she had not made up her mind. But that he would acknowledge it she promised herself—standing there with that innocent glance meeting his, those red lips childishly smiling, those dainty fingers held out to him.

“Your next visit need not necessarily be that professional one, you know,” she said. “And I can only promise to be very, very good—and not to eat so much!”

“I did not mean that for you,” he said, embarrassed.

“It is not the quantity but the quality.”

She raised her finger.

“We fashionable folk eat too much,” she said in a droll voice. “Dr. Rollinson, you said it. Even I. Look at me.” She poised her slender body on tiptoes.

John Rollinson

“At least, if I eat too much, one cannot accuse me of being vulgarly obese.”

“I *never* said that!” he exclaimed.

“*Good* afternoon, — good afternoon! Do not explain. The explanation would be worse than the remark, I know. *Good afternoon*, Dr. Rollinson!”

CHAPTER VII

A BEGGAR PRINCESS

JOHNS ROLLINSON sat quite a while thinking of that afternoon and of Edith Selleck. He was trying, also, to trace the resemblance between Mac and his brother Gregory—and the young lady. There was very little actually.

John Rollinson was fond of Mac Selleck—the light-hearted, and it must be confessed, lazy, philosopher. In Edith he saw Mac's light-heartedness without his philosophy. Beneath his friend's flippant manner there lay a world of earnest purpose,—undirected, but there for some future good, he felt assured. Perhaps Mac's wish concerning Edith, so lightly expressed, so strenuously set aside, had more weight with him than he imagined. Her face rose before him, fair as a flower; the eyes radiant and beautiful; the slender figure swaying like a blossom on its stem.

John Rollinson lounged back in his chair. Marriage? Surely, it was time for him to marry, as Mac Selleck put it, if he ever married. He could make a woman happy. He could offer a woman much that was desirable; he could offer her, too, a clean heart, a blameless life. There was no self-gratulation in the thought. It was

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the duty of every man to offer these to the woman he made his wife.

And yet —

“Could I love you?” he asked that beautiful face, those radiant eyes. “Granted that you would, or could, care for me, could I love you — as my father loved? You would know me, indeed, at home and abroad, but would you sympathize with me, in my pursuits and my ambitions? Could I help you make the best of yourself? Would you help me make the best of myself? Would you, without repugnance, take up the tasks of life with me as well as its pleasures? You beautiful, snowflake woman, leading the existence of a sheltered flower, what will be your life ten years from now? Still a pursuing of amusement, a sipping at folly’s brimming cup, a snatching at the gaudy wreaths of pleasure — or the deeper things?”

He straightened. Whither was this day dream leading him? Into the realm of impossibility. Later in life his mind returned to this moment, while he marveled still further at the greatness of a God who doeth all things well.

* * * * *

The four years that had brought so few changes to John Rollinson brought others of an almost wonderful nature to the little girl who had created such great surprise in his bosom that memorable day on which she had declined his assistance, and told him of her resolve to find and fill the place the world had for her.

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Mrs. Farrell, as he had foreseen, never worked again, so that necessity made her daughter a battler in the ranks of wage-earners. With a man's courage she lifted up her burden, making up her mind first of all to do "what was right;" and then to improve herself mentally and physically. In fulfilling these two resolutions a growth in moral strength naturally followed. Perhaps God rewarded, in this wise, the pitiful, childish prayer, "to make her better." He showed her the path, and the will, the strong, determined will that He had given her, helped her to help herself.

It chanced, on a certain afternoon, that she stood leaning against the counter in one of the departments in the big store employing her. And as she leaned so, a lady paused, hesitated, looked again, then walking back a few steps so that she might be unseen, at least for a little while, watched her covertly.

Mollie's thoughts were far away, and she was frowning as she stood there, for she had just figured out, mentally, her expenses for the week, and no striving could make both ends come together. The lady, white-haired, intellectual-looking, and with an air of great refinement, paid no attention to the bargains spread before her. Her eyes were intent upon the little face of the maiden who should have been attending to duty, and wasn't. Mollie became conscious of her defection suddenly.

"Please excuse me?" she said with a start. "I didn't know you were there. Can I wait on you, ma'am?"

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The lady nodded pleasantly enough, but the quick lifting of those dark eyes rather startled her. She dallied over some of the articles much longer than was necessary, trying meanwhile to inveigle the little saleswoman into a conversation. No oyster in his shell was more uncommunicative, and, after proving this, the customer purchased a few trifles and passed on.

But something in that wistful face, and in the dark eyes so much too large for it, had attracted Eunice Warden. Educated, clever, a worker—one of that large class who earn a livelihood by the daily exercise of mental talents—never given to fancies of any sort, or vain imaginings, she found herself literally haunted by that one small countenance; the strength in it appealed to her own strength, and the hint of sorrow in its every melancholy line appealed again to the sorrow she had known. Beautiful, Mollie Farrell never would be, but individual always. So Eunice Warden found her—going away from her, indeed, but taking that face with her. She would not yield to the fascination it had for her; she resisted the impulse, but was forced to give in finally, and at least once a week managed to pause at that little table. Her doing? No, but God's—who carried Mollie Farrell's life, as He carries yours and mine, in the hollow of His hand. And Mollie learned to know her, even to expect her, and would beam with pleasure when she came. For Eunice Warden was honest; she was real; she was earnest—and all of Mollie's love of the three qualities sprang up to welcome her.

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Several times during that year of Dan's imprisonment Dan's sister almost succumbed in the awful struggle — and it was during one of these despairing moments that Mrs. Warden caught an inkling of her history. It added sympathy to interest, and she, too, would fain have extended a helping hand to the girl who was fighting fate. Mollie Farrell owed John Rollinson a debt of gratitude, therefore she rejected his offers of aid as gently as she could. She was under no such obligation to Mrs. Warden, and that lady did not soon forget the haughtiness with which her assistance was declined.

“Why, here is truly a beggar princess,” she thought, in an amused fashion. “Silly baby not to recognize that we hold our own good fortune in trust, and that to help those less fortunate is a duty.”

But this almost insolent independence pleased her well. She knew that Mollie was ignorant and uncultured, with nothing to obviate these undesirable qualities but a passionate longing for knowledge. She also discovered — was not God bringing this to pass? — that they lived only a few blocks distant from each other. In certain parts of the city one has but to cross an avenue to find one's self transported from poverty to comparative comfort.

After that the work was easy. Mrs. Warden found the vulnerable spot in the girl's armor, and to some purpose. Attending to household duties after her return to her home at night made much study out of the question, so Mrs. Warden gave her only simple tasks at first. She

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did not know Mollie. Her desire for knowledge, once she drank at the Pierian spring, grew with what it fed upon. Her ambition outstripped her physical strength, so that her instructress was put to it to guard her from excess; with the experience of her almost sixty years of life the older woman opened the treasures of a thoughtful mind to this "little wonder," as she called her lightly. No great accomplishments were Eunice Warden's. She knew no other language than her own, but she knew that thoroughly, and the masters of prose and verse who had beguiled her weary hours were interpreted by one who loved them well to one who learned to love them even better.

Once in a while Mrs. Warden paused to ask herself a question: Where did the girl get this desire? What motive compelled this greedy seeking? What was the force that sent her, night after night, to tasks that would be distasteful to many, but which Mollie loved? In four years' time she had learned all that she could teach her. She wished she could get some clever master to take charge of her—to bring her higher and higher until that bright brain could reach its full development.

But those four years were so long, so long! Dan came home before the end of the first year, his term shortened by exemplary conduct. The "fellows," though cordial enough, greeted him with a restraint plainly noticeable when he joined them or tried to participate in any of their pleasures. He was not spoiled enough to mingle with the rougher element that would

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gladly have welcomed him and placed him in their front ranks, pointing to him with pride as the murderer of his man. Had it not been for Mollie he might have drifted to them in the end, forced there by the respectability that was only respectable because occasion had not presented itself. There are classes even among the masses, and Dan Farrell found no place in any.

Ah, but worse, most hideous torment of all! The mother of the boy he had killed annoyed him, and worried him, seeming to take delight in following him about, rendering his life miserable with her bemoanings and accusations. People made allowances for her, knowing that she had brooded so long over her son's death that her brain was turned. Small comfort this to Dan. He had meant to be a man when he returned, to make up to his people for the suffering he had brought upon them. And he had never forgotten that death bed scene — often during the long nights he would toss upon his pallet, the tears streaming down his face. And now — now that he had come home, home to Mollie and his mother, there was *this* — there was *this* to face. What wonder that he grew desperate?

But he still had Mollie — Mollie, his strength; Mollie, his consolation; Mollie, his redemption. When, at last, after two months of idleness, she found him lying with his head on his outstretched arms, such sobs as only a soft-hearted lad could utter rending his whole figure, she put her arms about him.

“Poor Dan!” she said, her voice vibrating. “It’s

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so hard — and I suffer, too, when I hear her tormenting you. I've been thinking it over a long time, Dan. You can't live it down here — not until you live up somewhere else. I know a way. Listen to me."

What she said then and how she said it no one but he and she ever knew. She had loved him always, but greater than her love was her belief in him. When she finished, Dan Farrell looked with new eyes at his future. He would live down, but he would live up first.

Not long afterward he disappeared. The good people who knew him and his story were kind enough to prognosticate all sorts of evil. They went to his mother. They questioned Mollie. But neither insinuation nor questioning ever gained the slightest knowledge of his whereabouts from either. Talkative at times she might be, but on this one subject the mother's lips were sealed; and this one subject sent Mollie to her daily toil with uplifted head and shining eyes. When John Rollinson inquired for the lad, whom he considered partly his protégé, the mother looked at him : —

"That's Dan's secret," said she. "I would tell you, docther, if I dared. But it ain't mine to tell — it's Dan's."

Sometimes, as the years slipped by, and John Rollinson took note of the growing comfort of the Farrell home, he wondered how his little "Joan of Arc" was faring. He never spoke of her — her name was mentioned briefly in the conversation; sometimes he would ask if she were well. Here, too, reluctance was appar-

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ent in Mrs. Farrell's manner and he respected her wish not to discuss her affairs, feeling that it was Mollie's wish. The mother was on his list of pay-patients now, and had been so for a long time.

"Not a judgment am I going to be, but a blessing!" He looked at Mrs. Farrell's happy face, and knew that she had kept her word, and that her mother's remaining years, in so far as God spared the girl to her, would be restful ones. A blessing she was proving herself, indeed. He heard Mrs. Reilly's praise, Mrs. McCabe's laudation without comment or inquiry. Responsibility adds to a person's value, ability to show ability commands respect, so that Mollie Farrell had mounted to a little pedestal of her own in the eyes of those who had known her and despised her.

That November morning when the young man so resolutely put Edith Selleck out of his thoughts, and started on his round of duty, it would be safe to say that Mollie Farrell did not exist for him. He had some one to visit in the neighborhood, and in the kindness of his heart thought of paying Mrs. Farrell a friendly call. During the earlier and more dangerous part of her illness, though she was even now subject to severe attacks, he had tried in vain to see her every day without Mollie's knowledge — for he knew that the girl's means must be straitened. He protested vigorously against accepting fees at all, but Mrs. Farrell only shrugged her shoulders, with a patient look on her face.

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“It’s Mollie’s way, docther, an’ you nor me can’t change it. ’Tain’t no use for you to refuse, neither, for if you did, she’d on’y find it out on me, she’s that sharp. I can’t keep e’er a thing from her.”

To his somewhat peremptory summons now, no answer came. He was intimate enough to enter without knocking a second time. The little kitchen fairly shone. It had evidently just had a thorough cleaning, but Mrs. Farrell was nowhere to be seen. The chair at the window, usually occupied, was vacant, although the huge workbasket rested on the broad sill as if its owner had but set it down. John Rollinson looked about him irresolutely. Then, the sound of voices reaching his ears, without further ado—or even without a thought on the matter—he walked into what was now the sitting room—the very apartment in which, that never-to-be-forgotten night, Mollie Farrell had waited for her brother Dan. There was a certain Sister Raphael, who had lately begun to visit Father Laurence’s people. He had met her often on her charitable rounds, and he thought now that she had stopped, in passing, to cheer Mrs. Farrell’s solitude.

But he drew back at the sight that greeted him. Mollie Farrell was sitting on the floor, and lounging against her a child of about six years. John Rollinson knew the little one. She was Nonie McCabe, and Mollie Farrell’s darling now as she had always been, though he did not know that. One glance told him that he was looking at Dan’s sister. The years had

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not lifted the melancholy from the dark face, or lightened the shadows in the somber eyes. Yet her lips were smiling.

“When you do sit in the dark,” Nonie was saying.

“When I *do* sit?” corrected Mollie.

“I forgot, Mollie. When you sit in the dark, your hair is so *black*. I love you better to sit in the sun, because then it shines and shines, like a princess.”

“A beggar princess,” said Mollie Farrell, thinking of Mrs. Warden. She put her arm around the child tenderly. “You mean the beggar princess now, Nonie—the one who used to change her hair with the weather!” And she laughed at her, and lifted her face for the child’s kiss. John Rollinson, staring, saw her give a violent start, and spring to her feet, the blood crimsoning her cheeks. She stood embarrassed.

“How do you do?” he began then, with an assumption of ease. “Pardon me if I startled you—but not seeing Mrs. Farrell in the other room I made bold to venture this way, thinking she might be here.” He glanced about in quest of her.

“Mrs. McCabe has gone over to church with her—it is such a glorious day for this late—for November. She cannot go very often when the cold weather starts.”

“Oh, so!” he said reflectively. Her expression was almost timid. He crossed the threshold and came nearer. Nonie McCabe clasped Mollie’s dress, one finger in her mouth. He did not see the child.

“I hope we have a few more days like this,” she

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went on, stumbingly. She was afraid — afraid of the silence, and of John Rollinson when he looked at her so, piercing her with his searching gaze. She felt that he could read her every thought.

And he did not open his mouth. The refinement of the thin face was a revelation, and there was a certain grace in the thin form. He was older in appearance than his twenty-eight years warranted, but he had not lost the clean, grave look that had distinguished him always. Once again the girl's face burned when those blue eyes searched it — those eyes with a tinge of the sea and the sky in them. And not noticing her embarrassment, he had no pity for it.

He had remembered that this was Mollie. This was she whom he had known as an unkempt little elf, tattered and torn, with mutinous eyes blazing out of a defiant, witch-like countenance, with mutinous lips giving forth unlovely words. This was how he remembered her, forgetting, for the moment, that the veil had lifted after that, and he had seen the depths of her heart. Slowly his expression changed. The searching keenness gave way to perplexity, to wonderment, to relief.

“I am rude,” he said, “yet you must pardon me. I cannot seem to comprehend that *you* are Mollie Farrell. You are *Mollie!* Why did not some one tell me? In the name of all things wonderful how have you accomplished it?”

If, during those struggling years, Mollie had asked her-

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self the reason for all her striving, the answer and the reward came then. She looked at him — and the “Joan of Arc” of that great hour of the past returned. She smiled.

“It is such a long story,” she said. “You said that in so awed a voice — as if the transformation frightened you. Yes, I am Mollie — and to a splendid and good woman I owe everything I am, everything I shall ever be.”

“A woman!” he exclaimed in his peremptory fashion. “What woman could accomplish so much? Who is she?”

Was it the voice, the attitude, the expression, that set fire to that part of her which resented idle curiosity? All embarrassment left her. Her eyes flashed — and they spoke more plainly than her lips, for she merely said, “You do not know her.”

John Rollinson was aware of the antagonism. In some subtle way her mood communicated itself to his. No, she had not lost the repression, the glorious independence. “Not a judgment am I going to be — but a blessing!” How she had spoken those words — how plainly he remembered them. . . . And what thought followed?

Simply that he was delighted to cross swords with this new, yet old Mollie Farrell, in whom the flame of early days was not extinguished, merely smoldering. Simply that he would like to battle with this girl and conquer her as he had conquered the child who had come to him

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in the end with those softly shining eyes. To what end? He did not ask.

It is the love of conquest that leads such a man as he along the path where lies his destiny. And sometimes when he is very sure of victory he awakes to the fact that he has been conquered after all. John Rollinson did not know that he had questioned his future with Edith Selleck and put it away for further consideration, to be overtaken by his future before he could consider it again. He did not realize that the daintiness of Edith Selleck, or of any young woman in what the world considered his station of life, paled into insignificance when he looked at Mollie. How he would have laughed at the mere suggestion. And how, if he had known, would he have put temptation away from him forever. Mollie Farrell! And he!

But knowing nothing, he gave the girl glance for glance, and his usually mild blue eyes flashed with dangerous light, like sparks struck from steel.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT MOLLIE FARRELL THOUGHT

“ I CANNOT explain it,” said the girl, gravely, “ but at least I understood. It was not the inquiry, you see, Mrs. Warden, as much as the tone. It put me outside his pale, as it were — a creature he, bending from a height, was surprised to find below him. Something in his path that he came across by accident and stopped to look at. Why not? What can humiliate me?” She smiled oddly, with a twist of the lips. “ I should expect that — seeing that he knows all the circumstances — Dan’s disgrace and all that. But,” she hesitated a trifle, “ perhaps you have spoiled me, you are so gentle and considerate and have given me such new ideas — ”

Mrs. Warden was puzzled at the note in the girl’s voice. There was discontent and pain. She knew Mollie Farrell well, she had heard her in all the varying moods of her young heart. But it sounded now as if some string, hitherto silent, had been tightened and touched by a harsh finger, echoing discordantly.

“ Don’t you think, dear Mollie, that you are too sensitive — ” then, as Mollie made an impatient gesture; “ well, it will only annoy you — I shan’t continue. I

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have asked Mr. Seymour to come to my little place this evening—and I also mentioned that you would be present. Please, Mollie? If everything is all right at home—”

“I cannot. Besides that if Sister Raphael has had no chance to see Mrs. Baker—”

“Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Baker!” Something had irritated good Mrs. Warden, for her voice was unusually petulant. “What in the name of conscience is Mrs. Baker to you?”

“Nothing, Mrs. Warden,—and a great deal!”

Mrs. Warden’s hands were lying in her lap. She crushed one over the other, finding it hard to control her temper.

“A great deal! I can well believe it. And I?”

Mollie turned those solemn eyes straight upon her. The glance went to her heart.

“Mollie, I’m not jealous, child—God knows. But should you put her before me? Consider me at times—consider what you are to me—and how little I see of you actually.”

“Why, we are together all day!”

“Together all day—our business day. One hour of social intercourse is worth the whole of the working day to me.”

“Social intercourse!” repeated Mollie, and again her lips twisted oddly. The smile sent the anger into Mrs. Warden’s face again.

“Why do you mix up with the creature—annoying

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woman that she is! What bond is there between you, anyhow, that you seek her deliberately? Yes, seek her — I mean it. Granted that Dan was unfortunate enough to find her son's head too handy when he struck him in his passion, the boot might just as well have been on the other foot, and you bemoaning the loss of a brother —”

“Am I not?” asked Mollie.

Mrs. Warden bit her lip.

“I've hurt you again — that's my hasty temper. And to show it to you! Yet, really, Mollie, I see no reason why you should make a martyr of yourself for Mrs. Baker's sake. Don't speak now, listen to me. I am older and more experienced than you, and I tell you you are going too far. You owe a duty to yourself. Mollie, Mollie, why not be just before being generous?”

“Are you sure that you understand?” asked Mollie, gravely. “How little I am able to do for her! Long ago, when I was as you knew me first, I promised to take care of her, if God would let me, and if He would help Dan. At Dan's trial I promised all that I am doing, and more — oh, so much more, for Dan's dear sake. It is my duty, Mrs. Warden, — in God's sight, as well as man's. I am simply paying a debt I have contracted. Think of that solitary being, Mrs. Warden, — all alone in the world, all alone through — Dan. Perhaps the small comfort I can be to her will help out Dan's atonement. As for putting her before you, I do not. You know what you have been to me — what you will be to me until the day we die.”

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“ Mollie — ”

“ Let me speak now, while I can. Oftentimes I long to, but the words won't come, and my thoughts run through my brain like the tiny, poor butterflies you sometimes see careless boys pinning to bits of board. You give me such sympathy with the world, and in teaching me have made me critical of other lives. When I contrast them with your life — when I contrast mine with yours or with Sister Raphael's, even the little I see of it — You to speak to me about spending myself, when — ”

“ Mollie, for God's sake ! ” An expression of actual suffering swept across her face. “ Mollie, do not — do not praise me ; do not speak of Sister Raphael and me in the one breath. I am a wicked woman. ”

Mollie smiled at her with those grave dark eyes.

“ Pray God, then, that I may be just such a wicked woman. ”

“ You see only the surface, ” went on Mrs. Warden. “ Don't you feel that I, too, have my temptations ? I, too ? Don't you ? Mollie Farrell, Mollie Farrell, I need you — I need you more than any one else in the world can need you. ”

“ There is my mother. ”

Simple words, simply said. But at the sound of them, at the note in them, Eunice Warden's chin sank upon her breast.

“ This, too, you have taught me. I did not understand my mother, nor did I love her rightly — until you taught

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me," said Mollie. "Her simplicity and her faith and her hope — *now* I understand her. Above all the accidents of birth and education the soul attains a certain nobility. My mother has attained it. She doesn't know it — no one else can realize it, perhaps. But I know and I realize. I thank God for my mother; I thank God for you, my friend; I thank God, yes, for my trial — even for Mrs. Baker."

Mollie was indeed giving voice to her thoughts to-night. Eunice Warden's eyes filled.

"Even for Mrs. Baker," she repeated, "and for what she means to you? Mollie, I know all about the long nights you spend with her. Would not I have been glad to go — to sit there with you —"

"She would not have you. And I never go except when she is in one of her bad spells —"

Her voice sank to a whisper. Perhaps the memory of those nights rose before her; the nights when she was forced to listen over and over again to the story of her brother's crime, repeated by the lips of a half-crazed woman. Mrs. Warden felt what that pause covered, and spoke in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I only know that you have not given me an evening in three months."

"I cannot help it."

"What will happen when they have to do without you altogether?"

Mollie laughed.

"As if there ever will be any danger. You mean

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that I should marry, I suppose? Who is there would take me?"

"Don't depreciate yourself. There are enough to do that for you."

"Oh, no — there is no occasion." Mollie shook her head. "But marriage is as remote from me as — as death. I do not look it, but I am strong. I don't think I shall die for a good many years."

"I sincerely hope not," said Mrs. Warden.

"And it seems to me that people marry just to make each other miserable."

"It is not a path of roses," admitted Mrs. Warden. "Although I was happy."

She sighed. The crowded elevated train seemed to fade from before her eyes, for a word like this had power to send her back to the past.

"It seems such a few years — the years we have to live," said Mollie, slowly. "I hope to understand when I am old — I don't now. I am twenty. All my life I have been getting ready for life. Soon I shall be forty; in a little while sixty. The years will be gone, and when summed up, it all seems such a little, little bit. So little and so much, and we do nothing after all."

"I was thirty before my first great happiness and my first great sorrow came," said Mrs. Warden. "I lived eight years in a rush of joy and despair. When I look back, it seems as if those eight years were as so many months, they were so fleeting, and yet so eventful. I lived thirty years waiting for those eight. And since

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then — Well, I am nearly sixty now, but memory is sweet. I would not give up one single pang. It is better to know, Mollie.”

“The joy of having and the pain of losing,” said Mollie, in an odd voice. No other word was exchanged until they parted at Mrs. Warden’s door — that lady to go straight up to her pretty little flat, Mollie to cross the avenue to her more humble dwelling.

“If it is possible, dear child, I shall see you this evening?”

“Why make it harder for me?” asked the girl, gently.

“Mr. Seymour will think I am getting him here under false pretenses,” said Mrs. Warden. “I expressly stated that you were coming.”

Her glance was a meaning one. Mollie shook her head.

“He comes because he is fond of you,” she said
“How can he help it, you are so good to him?”

“He comes because he likes Mollie Farrell,” said Mrs. Warden, bluntly. “And Mollie Farrell knows it.”

“I am sorry you think so,” said Mollie. “I would wish him a better fate.”

She understood then! Mrs. Warden breathed a sigh of relief.

“He’s a fine fellow, Mollie. Not a Catholic, but —”

“I must go,” said Mollie, hastily. “Don’t speak like that to me. There is no time in my life for it, no inclination, no wish.”

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“No wish to be loved and taken care of?”

Mollie set her lips obstinately.

“Well, Mollie, I won’t say another word. Like you he has not had a very smooth life — who in this world ever has? Ties of sympathy should draw you together. That is my opinion. And I can only add to it the fact that he is a splendid young fellow.”

Mollie looked at her wistfully. What was the matter with Mrs. Warden to-night? How had she annoyed her? For never had she been so irritable.

“You must not be angry,” she said. “I am not to blame for feeling as I do. He is everything good. But no one can help another do his duty — he must shoulder his burden alone.”

“Again, what folly!” She recollected herself as soon as the words were said. “Forgive me,” in a changed tone, “I am a cranky old woman. You *must* come this evening, if you can. Come and let us make you laugh. It will do you good.”

She pressed her hand and they separated. Mrs. Warden went on up the carpeted stairs to her cozy apartments. An ideal little home it was. A tiny piano, a well-filled bookcase; beautiful engravings; a few choice bits of china and old pottery — everything in perfect harmony; here was restfulness, here was peace, that seemed to communicate themselves to the clever face in its frame of snow-white hair.

“Oh, to have Mollie Farrell to myself for six months,” she said aloud, “What a difference it would make in

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her life. Environment, for how much are you responsible!"

It was one of her habits, contracted from being much alone, to talk aloud. Sometimes her self-communings were not altogether pleasant, for if she had her faults, she was unsparing of them. Now, however, she followed up the train of thought evoked by Mollie's last words. "It is not good for such an intense nature as hers to take life so seriously. How like Katharine she is! My dear sister, with her loving little face and her loving little heart! God grant this child's end may not be like Katharine's—"

She went to the piano and took up from it an exquisite miniature on ivory. The work of a great artist, it represented so beautiful a girl that one could scarcely believe it other than an idealized portrait. The large, dark eyes, soft as a fawn's, met the older woman's glance. A sob contracted her throat.

"First you—then Edmund," she said. "Katharine, have you forgiven? Oh, did you forgive—or were those words just the utterances of a creature afraid to meet her Creator with rancor in her heart! did the nearness of death *force* you to say that you forgave—You *are* happy now, little sister?"

Perhaps she read an answer in the gentle face, for she pressed her lips to the pictured one before she laid the miniature down.

"Mollie Farrell looks up to *me*," she said, her brows contracted. "Looks up to *me*! Well," she drew her

What Mollie Farrell Thought

breath hard, "I am bitter. I could not forgive — and I am glad of it. I think Sister Raphael, could I open my heart to her, would understand even though she deplored. But would Mollie Farrell, if she knew, look up to me? Would I be her paragon?"

Despite these reflections, when Harold Seymour entered the room an hour later there was no trace of trouble on her calm features. She greeted him with graciousness, chatting gayly as he placed his violin on the piano, and took off his hat and coat. He was thoroughly at home, Mrs. Warden's being the one place he visited on familiar terms. It was Mrs. Warden's good fortune to make friends of such men as he.

"Our coveted audience, I am afraid, cannot come," said the lady, noting the quick glance he gave about the room, and anxious at once to dispel all illusive anticipations. "She finds it so hard to get away. Mollie Farrell is a girl of many duties."

"She looks like that sort," he smiled. He betrayed no disappointment, being too well-bred, but his hostess could read between the lines.

Both loved music for music's sake, and Eunice Warden, in spite of her almost threescore years, or because of them, perhaps, was a player not to be despised. More than once as the minutes speeded by she thought of Mollie with regret. She, who had so few pleasures, would surely have enjoyed this delightful hour.

"Well," she said at last, lifting her fingers from the keys, "I think we are becoming exceedingly clever —

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both of us. And now I shall give you a cup of chocolate and send you home."

He laughed.

"I also compliment you on your playing," she added.

"Oh, *that!*" He was putting the instrument in its case. "It was the only comfort I had. Imagine the solitary boy all alone in a great, gloomy house, made miserable because his father had expectations! I tell you it was the grandest, the happiest day of my life when I was told that we were penniless, and that I would have to earn my own bread and butter!" He laughed again — a deep and mellow note that made her smile in sympathy. She motioned him toward a chair at the little table and he took it at once, and helped himself to some of the wafers she pushed toward him.

"I have been happy quite a while," he said frankly. "I am more happy now than I can tell you. But lately different ideas have come — ideas I never imagined could take root in my brain. It may be absurd of me, Mrs. Warden, but I wish you would allow me to ask you a question."

"Why, Harry!"

He blushed like a girl.

"Do you know Miss Farrell well? I mean is she intimate enough with you — You are great friends, of course, but there are degrees of intimacy — She might not — you see —" he blundered a little.

Mrs. Warden did not answer at once. She broke the thin cracker she held in her hand with a snap.

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"Why?" she said then.

"Oh!" deprecatingly, "that is scarcely fair."

"I know her very well," said Mrs. Warden.

"Do you think if I tried to pay her the attentions — the attentions a man wants to pay the girl he would like to marry — Tell me, is there a free field, and I shall ask no favor."

His eyes sparkled.

"Why do you wish a free field?" she asked curiously.

"At least I am honest. There *is* some one else?"

"I assure you there is no one else. Why should you care if there were?"

"It would not be fair."

"I see." She smiled, crumbling the wafer — she had not eaten any of it — her brows contracted. "I do indeed know Mollie Farrell well — but, talking of fairness, would it be fair on my part to betray any of her secrets? No, no, don't imagine that she cares for you in the least. I only meant in case —"

"Oh, in case!" disappointedly.

"In case, I said. Perhaps she does care and doesn't know it. Perhaps she can be made to care. Perhaps she can be coaxed into caring. Do you think such a girl comprehends her own nature? Its depths? Or its heights? Pure as a baby, and as guileless — and God knows how she has accomplished it. God only knows!"

She was uttering her thoughts aloud, and he under-

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stood as much. He did not interrupt, but listened. Again she began, as dreamily as she had ceased.

“ Sensitive — harsh with herself — proud ; how proud she is ; independent, yet willing to stoop to any indignity for those she loves, for duty’s sake ! Mollie’s love — the man who wins it — ”

Harold Seymour set his cup down.

“ That is not answering your question, is it ? ” she asked then with a smile. “ I can’t answer it — no one can. Mollie herself could not. There is such a thing — are you open to advice ? — as making one’s self indispensable. ”

“ And that is all the encouragement you have to offer ? ”

“ That is all. ”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“ Many a man has won his wife by making her understand that she couldn’t get rid of him. ”

He frowned.

“ And is that a manly procedure ? ” he asked. “ I shall not be one of those, Mrs. Warden. If Mollie — ” he caught himself on the name, and Mrs. Warden smiled a wise, wise smile — “ if Miss Farrell won’t care for me unless I force myself on her — ”

“ Spoken like a man — or a goose, ” said Mrs. Warden. “ How is she going to know anything about you if you don’t ? It’s the getting accustomed to you ; it’s the little services you render ; it’s the looking forward to seeing you ; it’s the anticipation of your affectionate words ;

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it's the delight in having some one confess her sway, gentle as it may be—"

"Is this the love of a woman?"

"It leads to the love of a woman. What else?"

Being a man he could not answer.

"If you want Mollie to care for you—if you want *any* woman to care for you, write these little things I have just told you in your memorandum book. Those are the things. In winning the love of a woman it is the little things of no account that count."

"I must take your word," he laughed, "seeing that my knowledge is limited."

"You can take my word—and my hand," said Mrs. Warden. She returned the pressure of his fingers heartily. "What comes or goes of this affair, I am your friend."

"You mean that? With Mollie?" His voice trembled.

"With Mollie?" She smiled at him. "What better fate could I wish my little girl—the daughter of my heart—than a husband such as you?"

"Oh, Mrs. Warden!"

Feeling forbade further utterance. With a last close grasp of her hand the young man went home, ecstatically happy. She stood after he left the room, listening to his receding footsteps.

"Yes," she said, "it shall be you, Harry—it must be you. Who or what is this John Rollinson in comparison with you?"

CHAPTER IX

THE MEETING OF EXTREMES

ACROSS John Rollinson's calm and uneventful existence a shadow had fallen. He was discontented. Something had taken away spirit and ambition. Being wise enough, he diagnosed it in the beginning as the *ennui* that is apt to come with overwork, with too much thinking, with a change in the weather. It had tormented him now for three or four days. What could it be? He performed each duty punctiliously — but there was no joy in it.

And now he left his home to walk it off, promising himself, half savagely, that he would *not* return until his mood had changed. The sun was bright, the air bracing — and before long his moderate pace developed into a swift gait; his blood began to tingle; it coursed through his veins more rapidly; youth and strength and a good conscience dispelled the vapors that disturbed his usually placid temperament. He smiled as he started back the way he had come. Here was proof positive that a man's will is superior to his feelings. He had willed that he should feel altogether normal, happy, pleased with himself; he was all three. The books that he had thrown aside in disgust lured him homeward. So did he turn

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his cheerful face in its direction, tear up the steps, and had just inserted the key in the lock, when a hearty "hallo!" came to him from the street. He turned and looked down into Mac Selleck's genial face.

"What luck!" ejaculated he. "Where are you going?"

Away flew the satisfaction and the recently acquired content. But that moment congratulating himself on new-found peace he now was conscious of great annoyance. The sight of his very best friend turned all that good nature into keenest irritation.

"Where am I going? Out, of course, if you're coming in. What do you want?"

"Well, you confounded old crank! That's a nice way to salute me! Come on down here and take a walk."

John Rollinson turned the latchkey on his finger, thoughtfully.

"Where do you want me to go? Some foolish place, of course, seeing it's you. Well," he replaced the key in his pocket, "I'm ready."

Mac whistled.

"Never — you never came without an argument. What's the matter with you — are you sick?"

"Do you know when discretion is the better part of valor?" asked John Rollinson.

"Um — m — m!"

"Don't talk."

Mac walked on beside him in silence for a few blocks.

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Then, without any apparent relevance, he addressed an elevated post : —

“ He fell, we are sorry to say, into a dream of doughty deeds with all his clothes on ; his henchman, having a stout fishing-pole rescued him and laid him out to dry. At latest reports he smokes a different brand.”

John Rollinson lifted his eyebrows.

“ Are you ever other than nonsensical ? ”

“ What’s the use ? ”

“ You wait. You’ll get over it.”

“ Heaven forbid ! What shall I find on the other side ? Now what’s the matter ? ”

“ Mac, I think I’m sick of myself.”

“ Strange ! ” murmured Mac. “ I knew you were sick — but to be sick of one’s self — how awful ! And the antidote ? ”

“ Work, I suppose,” grimly.

“ Man alive, you’re suffering from the antidote.”

“ I’m sick of myself,” repeated John Rollinson. “ Responsibility is proportioned to privilege and for the privileges which I have what responsibilities do I take ? I consider nothing but my own comfort. Right about me there are human beings striving, working, slaving, sacrificing, killing themselves — Oh, I’m tired — tired of it all, and disgusted.”

And this time Mac did not speak. He had never heard such expressions as these from his friend. It was a new phase — a phase his nonsense could not reach. So he said, quite seriously : —

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“John, tell me what has happened?”

“Nothing — nothing —”

They went on in silence for ten minutes, neither speaking a word. At last Rollinson turned impatiently.

“I can't go any farther with you,” he said. “You know how it is yourself, Mac — you just set my teeth on edge, and there is an irresistible temptation to tell you to go to the dickens, and let me alone. Now either say good-by or tell me what you want me to do.”

“Enter into paradise,” said Mac, serenely.

“Oh, really! so kind of you!”

“Edith called on her father this afternoon. I've promised to take her home. Come with me — see if she can't bring you around.”

Once more John Rollinson hesitated, his eyes bent upon the ground. In a flash his self-communings concerning Edith Selleck swept across his brain. They stirred him uncomfortably — they shocked him. Was he falling in love with Edith Selleck? Was that the reason he was discontented, unhappy, yes, miserable, actually miserable?

“I'll try it,” he said, but he was not talking to Mac Selleck. “Let us go.”

So that was how John Rollinson made his entrance into the private office of the great manufacturing firm of Selleck and McAndrews, unconsciously playing into the hands of the fate he came to test. It was a well-appointed room, and Mr. Selleck had given his

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charming daughter the most comfortable chair, and made her as much at home as he possibly could.

She had been curious to meet the people of whom her father talked so much. In these days of cold business relations, it was rare to see the respect and affection that existed between this great-hearted man and the people who gave him so much of their time for so much of his money. To properly illustrate Gregory Selleck's noble nature would take a volume in itself. A philanthropist in the best sense of the word; and a gentleman of that type which does not ask to which class a man belongs, remembering rather that "Christ was the first founder of the Order of Gentlemen." So he introduced his beautiful girl to Mr. Seymour — for whom the knowing ones predicted a junior partnership ere long — and to the stately Mrs. Warden, whom he called his right hand — and after that to Miss Farrell, decidedly his left hand, he declared with a genial laugh. All three were known, by name at least, to Edith, and while she treated them graciously, she seemed to have taken more than a passing interest in the last.

And to the silent, unresponsive girl of the people, this young creature, exacting homage as her right, was a revelation. The different intonation in Mr. Selleck's voice when he spoke to her — betraying his pride in and his love for his beautiful girl — pleased this other who had never known a father's affection, and had such recollections in regard to that sacred tie. There was unconcealed admiration upon her face, and Edith

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Selleck would have had to be more than human to resist it. She was, therefore, cordial and winning.

They were a striking contrast. The one like a fair white lily, her cheeks smooth, her eyes unshadowed, her lips untouched by a line of care or thought—and Mollie. Mr. Selleck, observing them, turned from the contemplation to Harold Seymour. He, too, had been watching. He, too, had been drawing comparisons. He, too, felt the difference—and what his face said brought a light to Mr. Selleck's. He moved closer to him. Their eyes met in a glance of sympathy.

"It seems unevenly divided, doesn't it, Seymour?" he asked.

"I would not say that," answered the young man. "But it seems—well, as if the borderland of the two countries, Joy and Pain, are just touching. The world is full of contrasts."

Mr. Selleck nodded.

"I understand," he said. "You are right. I understand. But I couldn't express it in that way."

Edith's first few charmingly chosen words—was she not skilled in the gentle art of setting people at their ease?—compelled Mollie to listen, joining after a little in the conversation with a simplicity and directness that also had their charm for the more worldly girl. She had entered her father's office out of an idle curiosity, forgetting, if she had ever thought of it, that her father, being a unique personality, had the quality of attracting to him other unique personalities. The three closest

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to him in his daily life were certainly odd enough to stand out from the crowd. Edith felt this. She had been rather bored; this was an experience worth the having — this coming in touch with “real” characters.

So she was tasting a new pleasure when Mac and John Rollinson came. Mollie, turning as the door swung inward, needed no second glance at that tall figure. With a quick movement she slipped away to her own corner of the room, effacing herself behind the big desk. Her heart beat rapidly; she felt dizzy. Fervently she prayed, at that moment, that John Rollinson would not see her — that Edith Selleck would engross his attention.

All the welcome that her breeding would allow crept into Edith's face. She extended both hands. It was the gesture of a child, welcoming, confiding. She had found that gesture irresistible, and she was quite prepared for the light that leaped into his eyes, for the warmth of the clasp that held hers.

“Well, well!” she said gayly. “Dr. Rollinson? Of all people! I shall begin to think that Mac has been telling me a few untruths.”

“Smile at him,” said Mac, mischievously. “Smile at him, like a good little girl, and save his life.”

“What do you mean?” She looked at the young man, half afraid of the joy this remark brought her. Could John Rollinson have said —

“Well, like a masculine example of Marianna in the Moated Grange, he is awearry, weary, and wishes he

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were dead — or that I was, which is worse, decidedly worse. So smile at him, beloved niece — how's that, Gregory? — or wake him up. He can't resist you long."

"Oh, Mac, you are the worst — Beloved niece! Isn't it *awful*? How can you endure him, Dr. Rollinson? He's perfectly absurd!" exclaimed Edith. But the color tinted her beautiful face, and she gave the young man a glance of wondrous softness.

"Then am I the original absurdity," he declared, rising gallantly to the occasion. "Though not so poetical as Mac, I —"

"Edith, if you will listen to me —"

"Hush!" She covered her ears. "You will persuade me that he is as bad as you are, and I should hate to believe that of the — sensible — and the — er — let-us-have-no-nonsense Dr. Rollinson! I'm going home now; father, I daresay, will be glad to see us leave." She got up as she spoke. "Mac," she added in an undertone, "I wish you'd look at this girl — her eyes, if you can. Ah, Miss Farrell —" Mollie Farrell heard her name pronounced in that sweet and silvery voice with much the same sensations that a condemned man feels when he rises to hear sentence of death pronounced upon him — "why have you vanished? Come here and say good-by to me — I must shake hands with you."

All condescension was she as she stood there with smiling lips. She would make John Rollinson forget those

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words she had said about "poor" people; she would show him that she could be gentle and winning to her inferiors.

Mollie came forward slowly. If John Rollinson's presence had power to tint those lovely cheeks with roses, it had power also to set that little black head in a haughty curve, and bring a chilling smile to the thin red mouth.

The poor man who was the direct cause of this graciousness and this hauteur stared at Mollie with wide-open, astonished eyes.

"Mollie!" he cried.

She bowed. At the sound of his voice, Edith's hand dropped in wonderment no less than his own.

"Why! You two are acquainted?" she asked, staring up into his disturbed face.

"There are few poor people who do not know Dr. Rollinson," said Mollie. "I among the rest. He was good to me and mine when we sorely needed his assistance." She spoke as easily, as gracefully, as Miss Selleck herself could have done.

"A charity-patient," thought Edith, with a sigh of relief. But John Rollinson's eyes were stormy, his brows met in a frown that was very near a scowl, and the irritation that had been his constant companion the last few days was nothing to the hot anger that swept over him now.

"I am flattered that Miss Farrell remembers me so well," he said. "She must not give people a false im-

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pression, however, since I was fully recompensed for any services I rendered her.”

Afterward, when his anger had died away, he would regret this tone and these words. Mollie's breath parted her lips; for one single instant their eyes met, and hers spoke the passionate resentment of that day the previous week. His answered her. Angrily glad—glad with a joy that thrilled every tingling nerve. He loved the antagonism he roused in her, as some pent-up animal loves the wild freedom of the plains. The whole situation looked very much like a quarrel between two people who thoroughly understood each other. Every one felt ill at ease; the atmosphere was chilled. Edith became weary of the office, and of all in it.

“I must really go,” she said hastily. “Good-by, Miss Farrell—I trust to see more of you in the future. Come, Mac. Good-by, Mr. Seymour. Good-by, everybody. You, too, father, for a little while.”

The young men followed her. John Rollinson, the last to leave the office, turned. Harold Seymour was standing beside Mollie, his eyes on the half-averted face. The tall, white-haired woman leaning against Mr. Selleck's desk was staring at him and he returned her glance, curiously. What a strange expression! Almost of derision, he could have sworn. And there was a meaning smile on her lips as, by accident or design, she looked at Mollie and Mr. Seymour. With sudden recollection of his surroundings, John Rollinson closed the office door behind him, and followed Mac and Edith.

CHAPTER X

HOW IT AFFECTED MOLLIE FARRELL

AFTER doing all that lay in her power to benefit the girl whom she so truly delighted to call the "child of her heart;" after polishing the rude diamond until it shone and glittered in the light of her keen, if loving, criticism, Mrs. Warden went still farther — she would have her with her all day long. And as soon as the chance presented itself, Mollie was appointed to fill a vacancy at Selleck and McAndrews'. The education, so peculiar, and acquired under such difficulties, was, above all, practical, and had developed in her a fine memory. Her striving after better things, and her planning of the battle of life for herself and for those near and dear to her, had given her sound judgment. Both of these brought her, aided by Mrs. Warden's judicious assignment of tasks, to Mr. Selleck's notice. With the usual business man this would have meant nothing beyond cold appreciation of her accuracy and her fidelity in small things as well as great. But genial, easy-going Gregory Selleck gave her self-confidence — and self-confidence was all that Mollie needed.

So this, in few words, is an account of the rise of Mollie Farrell. She had no time for the fine arts; music,

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painting, embroidery, dancing — those things in which a woman usually delights, were accomplishments she did not possess. But her brain was a storehouse of figures, and her memory marvelous. She had almost learned, too, the hardest lesson of all : how to conquer the bitterness of her heart ; her inner repinings at fate ; the desolation of soul that seemed to be part of her melancholy heritage.

Mr. Selleck often and openly regretted the fact that she was a woman.

“ She should have been a man,” he grumbled. “ With a brain like that at twenty. At twenty, mind you ! She should have been a man ! What shall I do when she marries ? ”

Mollie smiled in a pleased fashion when she heard this.

“ I do not think I shall ever marry,” she said. “ So do not let that bother you.”

“ Nonsense ! ” said Mr. Selleck. “ All girls of twenty say the same thing — I imagined *you* were different to the others.” He laughed. “ Those big black eyes of yours aren’t going through this mundane sphere without bowling over some poor fellow. It’s a woman’s place to marry — home’s the spot for her, with her husband and her babies. Not wasting, perverting rather, the natural talents God gives her in a battle with the world.”

He expected her to protest against this sweeping dictum ; he rather enjoyed an argument with the girl ; taciturn and reserved, when she was driven to speech, her words were so manly and so straightforward. But now

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she ignored all he had said, looking at him with a blank expression.

“ My big, black eyes ! ” she repeated. “ Yes, my big, black eyes ! ”

“ My dear child, I hope I have not hurt you — ”

“ Oh, no,” recollecting herself. “ It brings up an unpleasant memory — one that frightens me. I am frightened now, when I think of it.” And, setting her lips in the curve he had learned to read these last two years, she turned away.

“ Look here,” said Mr. Selleck, with sudden comprehension — “ no, don’t you go until I give you *my* opinion. It’s so easy, you see, for a nervous or imaginative child to get a fixed idea in its head. Perhaps that’s your case. Whenever that notion annoys you, do you know what to do ? Now for the practical business-like end of it.”

Mollie smiled — this was just like Mr. Selleck. There were many germs of helpfulness and truth in his practical, business-like way of looking at things.

“ Tackle some knotty problem. Go at it tooth and nail. Fight it. Wrestle with it. First thing you know you’ll be so deeply interested that you’ll forget all about the other. Now you try it. I know a man — ” he swung back in his big chair — “ a clever fellow, who inherited the most melancholy of temperaments. Guess that’s your case, too, by the way — some dead-and-gone ancestor poking out in you. This fellow I’m speaking about was of your faith, a Catholic ; and a mighty lucky thing for him. Every time he gave way to the blue

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devils he'd fine himself a rosary. Before he realized it, he said, he was so busy saying prayers that he wouldn't dare lessen the restraint he imposed on himself for fear of adding to the debt."

Mollie's eyes began to shine eagerly.

"Did he cure himself?" she asked.

"That he did. One of the most cheerful of mortals at the present time — employed right here in this building — you see him every day. No one could believe it possible that he was ever anything but thoroughly happy. He's married, too. I tell you, my girl, marriage is *the* thing that knocks all the nonsense out of young folks."

The conversation had revived her spirits.

"We'll agree not to agree on that subject, Mr. Selleck."

Perhaps Mrs. Warden had confided some of her cherished hopes to the senior member of the firm, for he raised a warning finger now. There was a twinkle in his eye.

"Your choice, I think, will meet with my approval. If it does, I shall give you my blessing."

To Mollie, at that time unaware of Harold Seymour's inclination and Mrs. Warden's wishes, the words conveyed no meaning not apparent on the surface. She shook her head and left him, refreshed and comforted by his cheering words.

* * * * *

And many a time these words returned to her, and she waged war with herself, falling back on some bright

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thought to help her, or praying with the earnestness of one sorely beset. Dearly as Edith Selleck loved her father and was beloved of him, it is doubtful if, up to this period, she had come as close to his great soul as Mollie Farrell. No prosperity could spoil this man; no adversity discourage. He expected the best of human nature and human nature gave its best as his right — the right of his childlike heart. Not one of his small army of dependents but would turn to him first in trouble or distress, knowing that he would not fail him or her. His indulgence would have utterly spoiled a less lovable nature than Edith's, for her nature was really that, in spite of the artificial veneering of the life she led. She forgot, sometimes, to be genuine, even with her father. She seemed so bright to him and so airy, and he saw so much that was pitiable in the world, that he longed as only such a man could long, to keep her happy while happiness was possible. Or, perhaps, wished that when her time of trial came, she would ring as true as this other girl, who had struggled upward out of the engulfing stream of circumstances, with face turned to the sun, seeking its light upon her soul.

After the conversation recorded above, Mollie tabooed introspection. She fined herself as did the man of whom Gregory Selleck told, and as she was very conscientious she soon found that her rosaries were a salutary restraint. The most pious among us would scarcely fancy an accumulating debt of prayer. But now, try as she would, fight as bitterly as it lay in her power to fight,

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she discovered that she had escaped her own control. Some force greater than her stubborn will beat down the barriers she had erected, and she gave in at last — yielding to the storm of emotion that shook her; dissecting Mollie Farrell brutally; acknowledging existing conditions. And though her face burned, she took that heart of hers and probed it cruelly.

She alone — she, Mollie Farrell, poor, humble Mollie Farrell, the daughter of poverty, the sister of a murderer! — she alone knew what John Rollinson had been to her. Her hero, the ideal of those dark days. It had been her childish ambition then to partly reach his level; to think like him; to see things with his eyes, though she might never attain his social standing. He was her ideal, her hero still — and now she knew her woman's heart. Now she knew why she had told Mr. Selleck she would never marry, and why she had turned with repugnance from thoughts of Harold Seymour. Because of this knowledge she asked that she might hate John Rollinson; that she might become indifferent. Strong-tempered, strong-souled, his face had led the way, kindly, gentle, encouraging, when the way was long. And so it had become part of her and she could not give it up. She faced a future more desolate than her past. She was resigned to it; she had never questioned it; had never, in all her twenty years, dreamed of anything different.

Ah, but then she had not thought to see a beautiful countenance light up as Edith Selleck's had done — for

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that man who had meant so much to her. The difference between those people and herself was so palpable — their accent, their manners, stamped with a likeness — yet so unlike ; their indefinable air of culture —

Her blood began to race with the protesting fury of other days. Her heart rebelled against the fate that seemed marking her out for a life of renunciation. Why should she be so different ? Why could she not be content ? Why these consuming ambitions ? Why, above all, had she fixed her affections on a man who never thought of her, who never could or would think of her save as a creature to be pitied !

Pitied ! His disdain, his contempt she would take and be glad of. But his pity, never ! She did not envy Edith Selleck. Mollie Farrell with all her faults could not stoop to envy. But she wished that she might be like her for one single day. To feel like her, to look out upon life with her laughing, joyous eyes — just once to be free, to be free from desire of the unattainable.

Do not condemn my little Mollie Farrell now for these undisciplined thoughts. At twenty one has much to learn, and if, as she herself had said, " This life is little after all " in a few more years she would understand. There are so many questions that only time, the grace of the world, can answer. Perhaps Mrs. Warden read the turmoil of the girl's mind, for she was very gentle and considerate all the rest of that day, and in the evening made a flying visit, ostensibly to call on Mrs. Farrell — who did not care overmuch for her — but really

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to see Mollie. Leaving, she bade the girl good-night, taking the dark face in her soft palms.

"I am hasty, and brusque, and harsh," she said tenderly. "I have no children of my own, but God seemed to send me you to make my heart softer—to fill a vacant place that I had not known was empty. Deary, I never meant to love you so—I meant to do what good I could for you, and let you take care of yourself, then—but now that you have crept around the very best of me, I seem to understand just when you are unhappy. I feel with you. I know your moods. If you are in trouble, let me help you. Trust me. No, no, not now, but when you can. Surely you will feel the need of me—"

The girl fastened those eyes upon the other's face. Then she took Mrs. Warden's hands away—not roughly, but indifferently.

"I am not in trouble," she said, "save the fancied one of my own making. Nor do I need assistance. What I am, I am. What I was, I was. Nothing ever can change or alter the fact that my brother slew a man in a drunken frenzy, and that in loving that brother I put myself right gladly on his level. And that my father hated me."

Mrs. Warden shrank, appalled at the depth these slow and measured words revealed to her. She put out both her arms and drew the girl within her embrace tenderly, closely, as if she would shield her from herself.

"My dearest," she said, and her voice trembled,

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“what new temptation is this? Do not talk so. You frighten me.”

“Pray for me,” said Mollie, under her breath. “Just pray for me.” She touched her cheek caressingly with her hand and gently released herself. “Pray that the temptation will pass. You are my friend — my only friend.”

CHAPTER XI

THE CHARITY SÉANCE

ALMOST at the very hour a slightly similar scene was being enacted in another part of the city : that is, confidences were being given and sought, but in what different surroundings, and with what different sentiments to those animating Mollie Farrell.

“I am going to reform,” Edith Selleck was saying, looking up into her father’s face, with a smile.

“Reform? That’s a peculiar expression. What is it now? Candies or violets?”

“I’m serious, father.”

“That’s too bad, Edith.”

“Don’t you think,” she pursued, not heeding him, “that I could be more useful, and a little less ornamental? When I ponder over it, it truly shocks me. There are Mrs. Douglas, and Mrs. Martyn, and Miss Partridge! See what good they accomplish! I’m going to do something, that’s all there is to it. I must give up being frivolous. I am debating upon whether or no I shall join Dr. Storrs’s church, and take a Sunday-school class.”

Mr. Selleck brushed the fair hair back from her forehead, gazing down into her earnest eyes. It was de-

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cidedly hard on the studied picturesqueness of her locks, she thought with a pang, but as no one was there to see the after effects, she felt that she could permit it.

And yet it was so loving, so gentle, so tender a hand! Untrained and undeveloped soul, approaching nearer and nearer your own high dignity, how these moments and these sentiments will return to you in pity some day: pity for what you were, and thankfulness for what God made of you!

“Why Dr. Storrs’s church, little girl?” asked Gregory Selleck, now. “I never knew you had Presbyterian tendencies.”

Edith laughed.

“Presbyterian? I had forgotten the denomination. Miss Partridge goes there, and she is *so* clever, and Dr. Storrs preaches so interestingly, and she has such unique experiences when she goes slumming —”

“That will do,” said Mr. Selleck, with a frown. “If there is a thing on the face of this earth that I detest, it is what you fashionable women call slumming.” He brought his open hand down heavily on the wide arm of the chair. “I should be mighty sorry to see a daughter of mine indulge in it, I can tell you. What right have you, Edith, or Miss Partridge, or Mrs. Martyn, to veil your curiosity under the name of good works, and parade among those people striving might and main — Pshaw! Supposing some of them started on a crusade to reform half of the folks *you* know? How would *you* like —”

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“Father, *father*, FATHER!” cried Edith Selleck, in dismay. She covered her ears with her hands, a gesture that was part of her, and looked at him with an assumption of fright. “Spare your poor little girl. I *never* meant it in that way. Why, you are angry, really angry, I believe.”

“Not with you, darling,” said her father, tenderly. “Not with you.” He kissed her.

“Do you imagine that I would go to them to make them feel badly, without trying to benefit them? How can you talk so?”

She was sitting at his feet. Now she crossed her hands over her knees, and looked up at him with soft and earnest eyes.

“I would like to give them what they need. I’ve never had anything to do with the necessities of life, dear, but you have. Your charity is so large that it won’t seem odd for me to be following in your footsteps. Let me do *something*. Dear father,” her eyes were shining now, “I’m not satisfied. There is a life which I have never lived. Sometimes in dreams I get a taste of it —”

She paused. With a shiver she realized that *she was speaking the truth*. She had had an object in view. In all her pampered life she had never been denied anything that she wanted badly, and all the opposition of a spoiled nature had risen up to compass this object: merely the obtaining of John Rollinson’s admiration. She did not love him, but he piqued her, and she would

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show him. . . . Ah, but now she was voicing her real desires! She, who had a distaste for all things serious or troublesome—what was it that rose in her to meet the words her lips were framing?

“It is the life *you* lead,” she went on quickly, “the sympathetic existence that does not shrink from knowing sorrow. I have evaded all distressing things—but it is not right. Don’t you think, if I go into it with my whole heart, I can accomplish a little?”

“Materially speaking, yes,” answered Gregory Selleck. “But there is a charity that elevates, and then it ceases to be charity—it is simply the putting of one’s self in another’s place. And there is a charity that degrades. It is this latter sort your companions are administering, probably—the kind that gets their names and photographs in the daily papers.”

“You think—”

“I think there are too many in it. Keep out of such altogether. If I hear of any occasion on which you may be of assistance, I shall gladly let you help.”

Edith looked grave. Impulsive by nature, this, her latest scheme, engrossed her whole fancy. She had taken the initiative step that day in going to her father’s office. She wanted to see Mrs. Warden, and Mollie Farrell, of whom her father spoke so often. Well, she had seen them.

“Dr. Rollinson knows a number of poor people, doesn’t he, father?”

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“Yes. Is it to him we owe this streak of magnanimity?”

“Indeed, no.” She pouted charmingly. “I did make a remark some time since about my general lack of purpose, and he said I ate too much.”

She waited until her father stopped laughing.

“Or words to that effect,” she added naively. “He laughed, too, father — actually laughed at *me* — at your daughter Edith. Let me show both of you that I am not so entirely a creature of bubbles.”

“A creature of bubbles!” He bent and took her hands in his. “Because I and Dr. Rollinson laughed, you are anxious to show me that these little hands are capable hands! What a laudable incentive!” His tender voice robbed the words of all sarcasm. She rested her cheek on his knee. “I don’t like it, Edith, — I don’t like it.”

“Does — is Mollie Farrell poor?”

The words were out. She hesitated — half afraid he would question her, and what answer could she give him? half ashamed to acknowledge remembrance of the girl’s name. But he did not question — to him it seemed perfectly natural that others should be interested in his people.

“She might be called so, although she is earning fairly decent wages.”

“Yet she is poor,” persisted Edith. “She knows poor people. She knows Dr. Rollinson’s poor people? He says *his* are different, so proud, so independent,”

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she spoke dreamily now. "Yes, he must have meant her — he surely meant her."

"What are you talking about?" demanded her father.

"Nothing," answered Edith. "At least, nothing *much*. I was simply wondering. She is independent enough, isn't she, and proud enough, too, your Mollie Farrell? Let her come to me; let her show me what I can do, quietly, without any one knowing — like you, father, like you."

She kissed him again.

"And we'll omit Dr. Storrs and Miss Partridge and all the rest? Is it agreed, Edith?"

"If you wish, father — only she wouldn't mind Miss Partridge — and Mrs. Martyn is such a dear little soul!"

"Well, I'll ask her."

Edith was silent. She hardly knew what her thoughts had been that afternoon when she gazed from John Rollinson's face to the proud one of her father's employee. She did not nor would she formulate anything that might savor of understanding between those two. John Rollinson could not so far forget himself, his breeding, his position, his duty toward society, as to have any serious interest in a girl like Mollie Farrell. And the whiteness of his life precluded anything else than serious or honorable thoughts of any woman.

In justice to Edith Selleck, it must be said that it was the young man's general integrity — in conjunction, of

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course, with his ignoring of her charms — that appealed to her. She heard many incidents of men's weaknesses; she heard many little tales of men's meannesses; of transactions which were not in accordance with those rules which should govern the conduct of manly men. For men are not so careful of what they relate of other men, and women have the faculty of imparting information one to the other, as all the world is aware. But of John Rollinson no man or woman spoke save in the highest terms.

Yet there had been that in both those faces which annoyed Edith. John Rollinson had never looked at her or at any woman she knew as he had at that thin, dark girl who returned his glance so forbiddingly. Nor had Mollie taught herself to smile when her heart was aching: there had been a quiver of the lips and an inflation of the nostrils which had spoken volumes to this keen observer.

“Do you think Miss Farrell would come?” she asked now slowly. Somehow after broaching the subject, she shrank from it. “She may not care to help me — she struck me as being very proud and haughty, even insolent.”

“There you misjudge her,” said her father.

“Are you sure?”

“Positive. You will not misunderstand me when I say that what you would call the natural self-respect of a proud nature when one has as much money as yourself becomes insolence from one whom the world con-

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siders poor. No, I do not mean to criticise you at all — you see according to your lights — *and* according to your years. At any rate it will do you no harm to talk to her — she is as bright and clever as she can be. I wish Mac were half so clever and had her head for figures — ”

“ The idea ! ” said Edith. “ Comparing Mac to any one like that — in her position — ”

“ And why not ? ” mildly.

“ It seems so horrid — so unsuitable — ”

He sighed.

“ Edith, I don’t think I shall ask Miss Farrell to come to see you. You are of two entirely different elements — and she would be quicker than I to resent such a remark. Edith, Edith, you foolish little girl! Get this new-fangled notion out of your head. Join Dr. Storrs’s church if you must — but remember that you have Mac and me to make happy, and that slumming will bring you into contact with all sorts of germs. I believe germs was one of your fads a month or so ago ? ”

“ You are laughing at me, ” she said in a low tone. “ Well, blame yourself then, if I do ill-advised things. ”

“ Edith ! ” he exclaimed.

“ Yes, I mean it. What a frivolous creature I must be — no one seems to think me capable of anything. Is my life to be made up of caresses — of a few kind words — ”

“ You are too sensitive, ” he said. “ The butterfly’s wing once crushed, who can restore its beauty ? Mixing with people foreign to you as those of another coun-

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try will certainly give you more pain than happiness. However — ”

“ Could I not make Miss Farrell my dispenser ? ”

He saw now that a really powerful desire must underlie the girl's words. It might not be a passing fancy, then. In the goodness of his heart he had never learned to deny her anything. He gave way now. He had only a hazy idea of what she meant to do, but whatever it was she should do it, and he would help her.

And the girl's notions were as hazy. She would be a gracious benefactress, she would bestow favors on those who needed them. To what end? Not with self-sacrifice in view — she was not prepared to make sacrifices, or to give much of her time to the service. Nor, if some one had suggested that she was doing it for God's sake, could she have coincided with the suggestion. She wanted to win John Rollinson's approval, and almost childishly she set about it. Had he been ready then to kneel at her feet, it is doubtful if the novelty of his devotion would have satisfied her. So do we set ourselves tremendous tasks to gain the unattainable, crying, like children, for the greater toys of life.

* * * * *

Mrs. Warden had to lend the powerful persuasion of her word before Mollie would accede to Gregory Selleck's request. The bitterness of that day of realization had been trampled underfoot. Once more Mollie was herself, contained, subdued, and it was really to prove it to herself that she agreed in the end, shrinking a little even

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at that, from what was still the unpleasant task of talking to a stranger.

Meanwhile, Edith Selleck, with the erratic flightiness that seems to be the prerogative of an unsettled mind, had been busy among her friends. It would be rather a pity to waste this attempt at well-doing without having one or two others participate — or at least stand off and admire. Mollie, leaving Mr. Selleck one bright afternoon with the intention of calling on his daughter, would not, under any circumstances, have faced the ordeal in store for her had she known. But she did not know. Edith, with great air of secrecy, had invited Miss Partridge and Mrs. Martyn to what she chose to call a “charity séance.” She would not invite Mrs. Douglas, another of her intimates, because she could not trust her not to talk. And Miss Partridge and Mrs. Martyn were not so cynical; they would be a little envious of her cleverness in inventing this new idea. Or maybe she wished to show them that her father’s daughter had originality. Whatever the reason, she invited them and they came.

Mollie was shown into the reception room where the three were seated. The quiet attire of the visitors accorded with her own, and womanlike, after the first shock of seeing them, this set her more at her ease. Edith looked approvingly at the neatly attired figure — “quite ladylike,” was her mental comment, and Mollie returned her gaze, marveling that so exquisite a creature could still be human — the body so graceful, the

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face so delicate. She had room for no other sentiment those first few moments but pure admiration, as genuine as it was spontaneous. There was a sweet smile of welcome on Edith's face — for she meant to bind this girl to her, heart and soul, and she could be winning when she tried. She drew a chair into the circle; she introduced her in such a way that no hint of patronage or superiority could creep into their manner — even if they were inclined to patronize, which they were not. Miss Partridge was tall and handsome, with a very strong, determined face, severe until she spoke, when its every line grew soft. Mrs. Martyn was round and rosy and gentle. Both adhered to different religious denominations, but both were perfectly sincere.

“I have to thank you, first of all,” said Edith, “for coming to us. I can understand that a busy girl like you, with so many cares and duties, must find it hard —”

“You forget,” said Mollie, gently, under the spell of her charming manner, “that your father kindly made it possible for me to come. I really do not know what you want of me — nor could I discover from Mr. Selleck. What is it? Will you tell me now?”

No beating about the bush with Mollie. Her directness compelled an answer.

“It means that you see before you a perfectly useless member of society.”

“My *dear* Edith!” murmured Mrs. Martyn.

“Oh, but now I have resolved to be useless no longer!” she said, not answering her, but looking straight

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into Mollie Farrell's eyes. "From what my father says of you, you are in a position to know the circumstances of a good many poor people. You can tell me just how to reach them."

"Miss Farrell seems almost too young, if I may venture to remark," began Miss Partridge, with a smile, "to pose as an adviser."

"Those things go much better under the direction of an earnest clergyman," said gentle Mrs. Martyn.

"There is Dr. Storrs, Edith," rejoined Miss Partridge. "He would be a better one to consult than any."

Mollie lifted grave eyes to the speaker's face.

"Miss Selleck merely asked me to come that she might put a few questions to me—not as an adviser. That is it, isn't it?"

Edith nodded brightly.

"We'll call it that," she said.

"We have evening classes for our poor and the sewing-school every Saturday, to say nothing of the Mothers' Circle, superintended by Dr. Storrs himself, which is really doing a vast amount of good, and embraces a certain section of the East Side. Then there is —"

"Lydia, don't you think I have heard over and over again just what Dr. Storrs is doing?" asked Edith, playfully. "I admire him very much—but my plan is to be laid on strictly original lines."

"Innovations are dangerous," declared Miss Partridge.

"My dear Miss Partridge, how *can* you say so!" exclaimed Mrs. Martyn. "Why, they have new ideas

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every other month in our parish! I'm sure they aren't the least bit dangerous! We are Episcopalians — extremely High Church, you know," to Mollie. "Last year Father Curtin introduced the confessional — *such* a comfort! — and this year he has processions and surpliced choir-boys. It is delightful — *so* religious. I find innovations charming!"

"And I call that a direct aping of superstitious practices!" said Miss Partridge.

"First thing you know," said Edith, with uplifted finger, "you'll be quarreling. And then I shall ask you both to go home, and talk to Miss Farrell myself."

"After all, it's the good we do, isn't it?" asked Mrs. Martyn.

"That is the principal thing," said Miss Partridge. "The good we accomplish. Creeds are merely conveniences."

"I am creedless," said Edith, serenely. "I can get along so much better with my friends by not adhering to any set form of rules. I would not like to have any one make laws for me." She shook her pretty head and the dimples flashed in her cheeks. "I am perfectly content to make laws for other people!"

Mollie Farrell sat gazing with bewildered eyes from one to the other. In all her life she had never listened to such a conversation as this. She did not know what to make of it. Those who made her small home-world were Catholics. Even John Rollinson was a Catholic.

"Miss Farrell will leave us with a false impression,"

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said Edith Selleck. "Don't be frightened," she continued, addressing the girl, "there are few such earnest workers as Miss Partridge and Mrs. Martyn."

"I only wish we were more plentiful," said Mrs. Martyn.

"We are, indeed, too few," murmured Miss Partridge.

"Never mind," said Edith. "One person in earnest is worth twenty only half-interested. My father praises you so highly, Miss Farrell, that I'm sure all this talk has been helping to give you ideas. Some people grasp a subject so quickly," and she smiled at her.

Again Mollie raised puzzled eyes. She was too serious to see the humorous side of this entire play of words. She only realized that something was expected of her which she was unable to give.

"You have confused me," she said. "I do not understand. What do you want of me? You have only talked about churches and classes and circles and innovations —"

"You poor child, so we have!" cried Edith, with a charming assumption of elderly wisdom.

"I do not grasp your meaning," said Mollie Farrell, briefly.

"No?" asked Miss Partridge.

"No?" asked Mrs. Martyn.

"Why, of course she doesn't," declared Edith. "I forgot to mention that Miss Farrell is a Catholic."

"Oh!" said Miss Partridge.

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“ Oh ! ” said Mrs. Martyn.

Mollie began to feel lost and unhappy. Miss Partridge's handsome upper lip stiffened. Mrs. Martyn glanced in gentle curiosity from Edith Selleck to her dark young visitor. Mollie wanted to get out into the open, away from this strange atmosphere. Why had they sent for her? What did they mean? For although, in case of necessity, she could give evidence of the faith she professed — thanks to the care for all his young people of zealous Father Laurence of Our Lady of the Angels — she did not feel that this was either the time or the place in which to speak to advantage. She had come for Mr. Selleck's sake, at Mr. Selleck's earnest solicitation. These women made her feel as if she were in another world, and Edith Selleck was stupidly frustrating the very end she had in view. For Mollie's quick defiance caught at last, and her head went up, and she gazed for a moment into Miss Partridge's eyes — and into Mrs. Martyn's. And then, with a lifting of the shoulders that was more expressive than any words, she turned to Edith.

“ I am a Catholic, of course, ” she said. “ My religion is not the topic under discussion, I believe ? ”

“ Not at all, ” said Edith Selleck, slowly. This was the way in which the girl had looked at John Rollinson. “ I wish you knew *my* people, ” he had said. “ *My* people ! ” Here sat one of them now — one of *his* people. “ I was talking to my father a few evenings ago about joining some church and doing work among the

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poor." She spoke hastily, confused by the girl's compelling glance. "He suggested — after I had mentioned your name — that you direct me. I can reach those I want to through you. But you must tell me how."

Mollie's lips were smiling.

"Mr. Selleck said that? He knows more about such matters than I do," she said. "He, too, has clubs and evening school's. But his is a pure love of humanity —"

"Ours, also, of course," interjected Mrs. Martyn.

"Oh, is it?" asked Mollie.

Miss Partridge looked at her inquiringly.

"Yes," she answered. "That is all we are working for — out of pure love of humanity — and for the Master's sake. We give to those who need it, irrespective of class or creed."

"What do you give? Yourselves?"

"Ourselves? Ourselves? We give a good deal of our time, if that is what you mean —"

Something rose in Mollie's throat. Indeed, Mollie Farrell, with her rigid independence, her self-reliance, her stoical endurance of privation, was ill chosen to send upon this errand, and the expression that flitted across her features made Miss Partridge stop and gaze at her inquiringly. For suddenly a vision rose before her — the face of a woman. One with whom she had had but little intercourse and yet whom she felt was a creature near to God. She saw this quiet woman, in her religious garb, her face serene and happy, her eyes alight with that joy of the spirit which only such souls know. It was

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but lately that she had come among Father Laurence's poor people — too late to help Mollie Farrell in her bitter hours. But she thought of that woman now and contrasted her with these, and they suffered by the comparison. Yet she spoke again, mildly enough.

“And doing all this, you have to ask a working-girl how to go about it?”

“Yes,” said Edith. The conversation was too serious. Mollie Farrell was too serious. Miss Partridge was too serious, and Mrs. Martyn. She was tired. Mollie's attitude brought back an unpleasant memory. She wished the whole thing was over.

“I know a certain woman who would not have to ask,” said Mollie. “Shall I tell you about her?”

Edith Selleck sat up, conscious of new interest. For Mollie's face had changed and Mollie's eyes were glowing; and to some purpose Mollie Farrell found words when most she needed them. She rose from her luxurious chair and stood beside it.

“She makes her way into a humble home, and takes a fretful baby from its mother's arms and hushes it. She has sat for hours soothing the last pangs of the dying, dissipating their fears. She has taken up the ragged urchin from the street and clothed it in garments begged from others — and washed, with her own hands, its little face. She gives of love, great store of love, whose source is a divine one. She does not speak, I know, of schools or circles or clubs or classes, but these things that I tell you she does, and countless others.

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Few see her, saving only the ones that she befriends. As for myself, I can do but little — but what I have I give and no one has to tell me how. God tells me. And I am sure that God will understand. Miss Selleck," she bent her shining eyes upon the girl's fascinated face, "when you really want to help your fellowman, ask your father to let me send this woman to you. Remember, before doing so, that she is a Catholic — a Catholic nun in the garb of her Order. But you will need no other teaching."

And turning, with a bow that included all three, Mollie Farrell left the room.

CHAPTER XII

“MY QUEEN!”

“THAT is what I call a dreadful fizzle!” said Edith Selleck. “Miss Partridge and Mrs. Martyn ready to laugh at me, I suppose, and Mollie Farrell, father’s pet particular hobby, altogether disgusted. What shall I say to *him*? You’re in a nice fix, Mistress Edith!”

Still attired in her pretty tea gown she stood before the mirror in her own room. The polished glass did not often reflect such a frown of annoyance as showed now on the fair and usually placid face. She felt more than mere annoyance. She was angry.

“I suppose she *must* be vexed or she wouldn’t have left like that,” she said. “One never knows how to treat with a person of that class—never. I am sure I was nice enough. Father is right—it is an act of foolishness to attempt anything of the sort. I could never understand people like Mollie Farrell, or they me. As for the woman she spoke about, well—” she smiled sarcastically—“oh, *no*. Once is quite a sufficiency, thank you!”

She stopped abruptly. Then she put her hands up to her breast, and the whole expression of her face

“My Queen!”

changed. For one moment she looked into that mirror seeing a creature who was herself, yet not herself; into a face that was her own, yet not her own.

“Speak the truth,” she said. “You are jealous of Mollie Farrell! She is drawing you to her while repelling you! How beautiful in their earnestness those eyes were — you cannot think of anything but the soul underneath when she fastens them upon you! How I envy you — oh, Mollie Farrell! how I envy you your capabilities of feeling, even of suffering. Your strength, your tenacity, your character — I envy you all three!”

She threw herself upon the couch near her. The clock struck the half-hour — it was time for her to dress, but she did not hear it. She had forgotten everything — forgotten that John Rollinson was coming, forgotten that she had planned her every action for this night — that she had known in what directions she would lead the conversation; that she had known what pretty things she would say, and how she would say them, and what effect they would have.

But now, lying there, she felt small and contemptible, and the feeling was so humiliating to one of her pride that she drooped beneath it. Self-complacency had deserted its throne, self-satisfaction had abdicated, self-love was wounded sorely. And she sat amid the ruins.

She roused herself at last, a faint smile trembling at the corners of her mouth; she held out the hands of which she was so vain, and looked at them.

“My Queen!”

“Are you a fool?” she asked herself. “Are you? This is only temporary — it will pass. To-morrow —” She paused.

“To-morrow? What is the matter with me? To-morrow? And the days after . . . the days after. . . . What *is* the matter with me? I am afraid.”

Of what? Of whom? She had no time to answer that, for her father’s step came up the stairs, stopping when it reached her door. He thrust in his head, entering when he saw that, starting to a sitting posture, she looked at him inquiringly.

“Dreaming still, little girl? I was detained to-night. Dinner will be ready in a few minutes and John Rollinson is downstairs with Mac —”

“Oh, is he? I did not know.” She sprang to her feet, flushed, animated, sparkling — all the ingenuousness of manner that characterized her coming back. “Is it really that late?”

“Yes, but I can’t go until I find out how you and Miss Farrell got along.”

“Miss Farrell? Oh . . . Got along, you said? I am the unluckiest would-be philanthropist alive. I was very, very, *very* nice to your Miss Farrell, father, but I’m afraid she went away rather — well, you know, rather —”

“Edith!”

Her father’s brows came together suddenly; the sternest expression she had ever seen upon his countenance crossed it.

“My Queen!”

“You mean you angered her? Are you sure? Tell me — tell me at once.”

She resented, with all the bitterness of her heart, that note in her father's voice. It was the first time in his life he had ever used so harsh a tone to her. And that it should be on account of that girl! She turned away her head to hide the tears.

“I said nothing to hurt her, believe me. And I do not think she is angry. But she left rather abruptly, that's all.”

Her voice trembled.

“Never mind, darling,” he said then, surprised at her emotion. Coming nearer, he drew her toward him. “Forgive me if I seemed unkind — I did not mean to be.” He patted her cheek tenderly. “You are not quite able to grapple with life's problems yet, sweetheart.”

Yielding to the impulse, she put her arms about his neck. The unlikeness to her usual self that had stared at her from the mirror a few moments before looked now into her father's eyes and puzzled him.

“Dear,” she said, and her voice was not his Edith's, “dear, life's problems find us out, no matter where we may be. I have part of your soul in me, father — I hope that I can develop it — I — that I may be worthy of it — Oh, go, go, father — I shall never get dressed.”

“But, Edith, what — ”

“Nothing, father. Do go now, dear. I hear Marie in the other room — I will have to fairly rush.”

“My Queen!”

“Something is disturbing you,” he said with a man’s persistence. “It is a notion of yours. Get it out of your head. Do not worry. You will never see Miss Farrell again, so why be vexed over anything that has passed between you?”

“Never see her again!”

Edith stood where her father left her, a shadow on her face. “Never see her again! Why, how true that sounds, how real! If it were only so. Why should I think of a person who will never cross my path again? Why have I thought of her all the time since that day her eyes first looked into mine? Why is she always with me? I am afraid—yes—but of her? Of her? Why? Because of John Rollinson?” She laughed aloud, and brought her hands together. “Because of John Rollinson, I, Edith Selleck—one of the most beautiful girls—I can say it truly, I *will* say it—one of the most beautiful girls he knows—am afraid of an ugly, insignificant charity patient! Oh, no, no, no! That cannot be, that shall not be! Come, Marie, come, come! No, not that white gown to-night; it is too colorless, too die-away. Get out my new blue one. Hurry, hurry, we have just ten minutes!”

* * * * *

John Rollinson, Mr. Selleck, and Mac were lingering over the dinner-table. The sound of melody reached them, and John Rollinson stirred in his seat. He was fond of music and he knew that Edith Selleck’s voice was exquisite. Listening now, he could almost distin-

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guish the words she sang, and he looked at Mac impatiently, waiting for him to stop talking.

“Didn’t our Edith look swell to-night!” he was saying, “I tell you, Greg, I’m not going to marry until I find a girl like my little niece.”

“And when do you think that will be?” asked Mr. Selleck, with pardonable pride. Mac rolled the cigarette he was about to smoke and shook his head.

“There isn’t another like her on earth,” he declared. “And the niftiest thing about her is that she’s never —”

“She’d be delighted to hear herself described as ‘nifty,’ I am sure,” said Mr. Selleck. “I wish you were my son instead of my brother, Mac, and I’d cut you off without a penny unless you stopped using slang. Come on — you don’t want that cigarette — let’s get out of here.”

For, in spite of himself, he felt uneasy. He could not bear to remember the sadness of his daughter’s face that night. All during dinner he had watched her, but no gay-hearted child could have been happier, no whole-hearted girl more brilliant. Always attractive, her own self-disapprobation had put her on her mettle, and the admiration in her father’s eyes, in Mac’s, in John Rollinson’s, gave fresh impetus to droll raillery and gentle wit.

Miss Cairns, Mrs. Martyn’s niece, and Edith’s own particular chum, was with her in the drawing-room. Mrs. Devoe, also, a young society woman who had acquired a reputation for unconventionality.

“My Queen!”

“Aunt was telling me of a somewhat odd experience you had a few hours ago,” Miss Cairns was saying, languidly. “Didn’t you have a curious person here, Edith?”

“A person?” Edith lifted her eyebrows. “That is scarcely correct. She is not of our set, but a brighter young woman —”

“Edith, you tantalizing girl, you want to make us ask you questions,” said Mrs. Devoe, with a smile. “What are you doing with bright young women not in our set?”

Edith rested her head comfortably among the cushions.

“If you draw your chairs close to mine and listen, I’ll recount the whole affair. Come, the gentlemen are surely at their first cigars yet. Do you know,” her eyes were sparkling, “that I have invented an entirely new amusement?”

“Is that strange?” asked Mrs. Devoe.

“Oh, but this is *unique!*” said Edith. “I call it a charity séance, and intend to have more of them. You see, you want to capture some inhabitant of the slums, turn him loose in your reception-room — after first locking up anything very valuable, you know —” She laughed, and they laughed with her. “Give him something good to eat and listen as he narrates his experiences, real or imaginary. And,” she concluded, “you’ll find vast entertainment picking out the thread of truth from the tissue of fabrication. Don’t you think that a good way of discovering how the other half live — at first hand, as it were?”

“My Queen!”

Miss Cairns broke into a low ripple of laughter.

“Edith! And it was only this afternoon that I heard that aunt of mine declaring how much in earnest you were, and what an acquisition you would be, etc., etc., etc., with variations. I quite despaired. You know I cannot stand anything distressing — and to follow you into such scenes, or to lose you — The possibility of having to choose quite upset me!”

“Did you do all this to-day?” asked Mrs. Devoe.

“Well, not exactly. Miss Farrell is very nice for one in her circumstances —” she glanced up with a surprised smile that included John Rollinson, just entering, and the two following him — “in fact, she is a decidedly attractive character. Only I did not discover it until she was going away.”

“It is so mystifying,” said Miss Cairns. “Why not begin at the beginning?”

Edith looked across the room. Mac and her father had stopped in the doorway to argue out a question — but John Rollinson’s eyes were fixed on her. Some emotion brought the color to her cheeks. He was listening. Listening to what she would say of — *that girl*. Well, he should hear.

“Miss Farrell called at my request — father got her to come. She holds some sort of a position in his office, you know, and he seems to think she is a veritable paragon. I was curious.” She laughed. “Men take queer notions at times, don’t they?”

“Very,” said Mrs. Devoe, with an odd smile.

“My Queen!”

“She was quiet at first; diffident and all that. It is hard for a person of her sort to step over the boundary line with any kind of self-possession, and she was decidedly embarrassed. And then Miss Partridge and Mrs. Martyn began arguing — O dear!”

“It must have been interesting.”

“It was, I assure you. Toward the end when she warmed up and gave me a few of her ideas — well!”

“And they were?”

“Something about washing babies and mending their clothes and sitting up with dying people and visiting the sick —” Edith held up her two small hands — “think of that, and look at these!”

“Imagine!” echoed Miss Cairns.

There was a daring gleam in Edith’s eyes.

“You are listening to the strange experience I had this afternoon, Dr. Rollinson? Do come over if you would like to hear.”

She was angry at him for the half-pitying, wholly-wondering expression on his earnest face; angry at herself for the shame she felt at knowing the reason of his disapproval; writhing under the self-scorn she was enduring. And in this mood the spoiled, imperious girl was likely to say anything, to do anything, careless of consequences. He did come nearer when she called to him, but the penetrating glance he gave her did not quell the turmoil of her spirit.

“Dare I ask you to repeat it?” he said, taking a vacant chair beside her. “I really thought I heard Miss Far-

“My Queen!”

rell's name mentioned. But of course that was impossible. Such a nature as hers is hardly worth discussion in a lady's drawing-room.”

The quiet irony in his voice was unmistakable.

“Save as it serves to pass away an hour or two. I had her here this afternoon. She is most amusing.”

His face paled, his nostrils quivered, but the well-bred smile never left his lips.

“Amusing? Indeed! I am glad you found her so — it must be a new side to her character. I know her well, and have always considered her very serious.”

“You don't say!” murmured Miss Cairns.

“I am beginning to think that there is more to this girl than we imagine,” trilled Mrs. Devoe.

“Perhaps, then,” laughed Edith, “she did not mean to be amusing. Do you actually know her — well? She isn't anything but what appears on the surface? Loss of money affects some —”

“She is only just what she appears to be,” said John Rollinson, quietly, “the sort of a girl that makes a man glad his mother was a woman.”

Edith thrilled through every vein in her body. She would have given, then, all she owned in the world to have unsaid the cruel, heartless things this man had just listened to from her lips. The manliness in his voice appealed to all that was best in her. She quivered under that casually uttered remark, veiling the feeling underneath, nor dared she trust herself to raise her eyes again.

“My Queen!”

No one could tell what was passing in his mind. Miss Cairns laughed lightly and looked at Mrs. Devoe.

“I would *love* to see her,” she said.

John Rollinson bit his lip. He had surely forgotten himself. What did these women care for him or for Mollie Farrell? Yet a wave of indignation went over him, and he resolved to see to it in the future that no idle scheme or foolish curiosity would subject her to their cold scrutiny.

A constrained silence had fallen over the little group. One woman among the three cared more than he was aware of. Edith Selleck's desire to improve the condition of the poor had brought her the first real heartache she had ever known. John Rollinson had no idea why his face paled and his eyes flashed when he thought of slight being put upon the girl who seemed born for trouble. But Edith Selleck could have told him why. She sank back in her chair. Just then Mac spoke.

“What's that you were singing before we came in, Edith?” he asked.

“One of the old, old things, I guess — I'll sing it for you some other time.” The question came as a great relief.

“Try it now,” put in her father. “I made Mac give up his cigarette so that we might hear a few songs.”

“You surely owe Mac something for that,” said Miss Cairns, with a coquettish glance in the young man's direction.

Edith smiled lazily. She was recovering her self-possession.

“My Queen!”

“If you will allow me to add my voice?” said John Rollinson. “Please, Miss Edith?”

“How can I resist?” she asked lightly. “The same song? Yes? Very well. It is beautiful, though it is so old. No, Miss Cairns, thank you — I’ll accompany myself this time. Mac, come over here and sit down. This is your favorite chair.”

She touched the keys gently, her sweet tones filled the room with melody. But the song, for all its beauty, did not ease the discomfort in John Rollinson’s heart nor the discontent in her own. And indeed the words seemed to have a special significance.

“I will not dream of her tall and stately,
She that I love may be fairy light ;
I will not say she should walk sedately,
Whatever she does, it will sure be right.
And she may be humble or proud, my lady,
Or that sweet calm that is just between —
But whenever she comes, she will find me ready
To do her homage, my Queen, my Queen.

“But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in her spirit, this maiden I love ;
Whether her birth be noble or lowly,
I care no more than the Spirit above.
And I’ll give my heart to my lady’s keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean ;
And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her, my Queen, my Queen.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE DRAWING OF THE VEIL

JOHN ROLLINSON went home in a most unsatisfactory state of mind.

He had done his duty as a guest; he had been invited that he might be entertained, and he had borne his part in making conversation; and listened with attention to the discussions, earnest or otherwise, in which his hosts and hostess indulged. He had been mildly humorous, as humorous as it was possible for him to be, since he was not that by nature. Miss Edith felt, however, the absent-mindedness he fought against, and she resented it. Mac felt it also, for he was keen of observation where John Rollinson was concerned, and he wondered at it. Miss Cairns, who greatly liked the sometimes witty, always nonsensical Mac, was disappointed at his silence. Mac rarely condescended to be sensible when talking to Edith's friends. He treated women as creatures to amuse, and once in a great while to be amused by him — therefore Miss Cairns was at a loss to account for his subdued manner, and puzzled over it too much to enjoy her evening. So the cozy little dinner party was not quite the success its giver had planned.

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When he reached his place of abode, John Rollinson found that he had twice been urgently called to Mrs. Baker, and that the second messenger had left not ten minutes before. He went out immediately, rather glad to go; in fact, although even the thought might be counted rank heresy, he felt that he was summoned to a more congenial scene. He was disturbed — and work being his only panacea for mental annoyance, he was glad that work presented itself.

He was thinking, needless to say, of Mollie Farrell, as he swung off in the direction of the East Side. She had haunted him persistently of late, and this last few hours seemed to have called up all the chivalry of his nature, so that like a knight of olden times he would guard her, not alone against the world, but against herself. He was doing his best to identify the little fragile child, the “Joan of Arc” of five years before, with the girl who looked at him now so proudly and so fearlessly. Forgotten her? He wondered that she had ever slipped from his memory. She *had* found a place for herself, the child! Nothing very high or very wonderful — until one thought of her as she had been, and realized what stupendous perseverance had made that crude, undeveloped brain the equal of a man’s. Was not that what Mr. Selleck called it — “the equal of a man’s”?

“It but proves to me my firm belief,” he mused, half aloud. “There is more pure and unadulterated talent going to waste for lack of cultivation than the schools do dream of.”

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He contrasted the two girls—the one he had just left and the other whom he had met twice within the last few weeks.

“Yes,” he said with a little sigh, “things do seem to be unevenly divided. Yet there is nothing but sorrow to form a character; the greatest deeds are wrought in suffering and pain. What a strange place this world would be if there were no sacrifices, no silent martyrdoms, nothing but joy and happiness.”

He knew every step of the way, every turn of the road that led to Mrs. Baker’s humble dwelling. He had traversed it before at night and on a summons as urgent—but he had never found the way so short. It was because of the thoughts that kept him company; the shadow that kept pace with him; the eyes that were looking into his. He was thinking of her and for her. The great event of his life had come; the unveiling of that soul of his, that real part of him, to which he was a stranger, as he had told his best friend, was near at hand. And he would fight against himself. He did not know it.

“She will marry, I suppose,” he continued. “Marry and settle down here, where she was born, among her own people . . . her own people! . . . Those great black eyes will be dimmed with weeping for some careless husband. She will rear children—she will love them. How she will love her children, she is so intense, so strong. . . . That little droop to her mouth will grow more pronounced as the years go on. That

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little figure will shrink as her mother's has done, and the proud light in her eyes be quenched with the flow of tears. And she is so unfitted to take up the tasks that fall to the lot of poor women. . . . Unfitted? Mollie Farrell? She is fitted for anything, that girl. Why shouldn't she be?" with a note of bitterness. "What is there to keep away from her the burdens that make the destiny of every woman?"

It seemed as if those thoughts had been powerful enough to bring the girl into his presence — for it was Mollie herself who opened Mrs. Baker's door to him in answer to his knock. He started — a cold shiver ran through him. It seemed uncanny — as if he had been able to conjure her to him by the force of thought. And then, looking into her face, he saw that this was a new Mollie Farrell. This was the little girl he had fought to find under the mask of haughtiness. No antagonism now, for there was no thought of self; no pride, no coldness; all that Mollie Farrell was by nature, forgotten. Following on that first great shock of surprise came gladness — yes, joy. To-night he would know her. The white soul of her was in her eyes, and its glory transfigured her.

"It is really you — at last," she said with a sigh of relief, that sounded sweetly in his ears. "I am so glad, so glad. I was afraid you weren't coming at all — and it seemed so long to wait until morning —"

He shut the door behind him, and stood now, holding his hat a moment before he gave it into her outstretched

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hands. Then, removing his light overcoat, he threw it across a convenient chair.

“How long has she been ill?”

“All evening. She is in such great suffering that I—”

“Who is with you?” In his effort to speak indifferently his voice sounded almost hard. “Are you aware of the hour? Who is here besides yourself?”

“No one.”

She said nothing more — only looked at him a little wistfully. “Not a judgment am I going to be, but a blessing!” He turned his eyes away, feeling that he could not meet the gaze which some strong emotion was depriving of all its guarded pride, leaving only pathos. She hesitated, undecided whether or not to say the next words; then she plunged into them abruptly.

“Is it not my duty to be here? She is alone. She has no one — no one in the world.”

“Pardon me. In this case the duty is a very much mistaken one — rather a desire for self-torture,” he said. “You forget that I know the circumstances.”

Mollie pressed her lips together and led him to where Mrs. Baker was reclining upon a sofa that had been drawn up to the open window. The old woman lay with her head thrown back upon the pillow, her features convulsed, an expression of great pain upon them. Her hands were clenched, her lips parted. John Rollinson knew the gray shadow on her face.

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"I can only ease her suffering," he said. "Has Father Laurence been called?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"About eight o'clock, I think."

"*You* think! How long have you been here?"

"All evening."

"Since you left — Miss Selleck's?"

She started. He did not see the expression of the swiftly averted face. The woman on the sofa began to mutter, and to twist her head from side to side. Delirious sentences fell from her parched lips.

"Why should she not, I'd like to know?" she cried querulously. "Ain't it her right to do it, ain't it?"

"Hush now," said Mollie Farrell, softly, bending over her, and John Rollinson felt himself effaced. "Come, you must be thirsty — you have not had a drink in such a long while." She lifted the gray head on her arm, and with infinite tenderness brought a cup of cool water to the quivering mouth. "I'm sure water cannot hurt her?" she asked in an aside. But the woman pushed the cup and the hand that held it away.

"Wasn't it her brother took my Tom from me — the on'y one I had in the world? Wasn't it? What is it you do be tormentin' me for? Isn't it her right to give me what I want an' what I need an' all? For I have ne'er a soul —"

"Oh, hush, hush, hush!" breathed Mollie. "Hush, Mrs. Baker — don't you see Dr. Rollinson?"

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“I do see him — that’s him right there an’ it’s him I’m askin’. He thinks it ain’t right by the way he’s lookin’ at me. I ain’t doin’ no wrong, am I, docther?”

“No,” said John Rollinson, soothingly. He was taking a small vial from the little case of drugs he carried in his pocket. He did not glance in Mollie’s direction — if he had, he would have noticed that her face was crimson — a painful red that burned deep. “Here is something that will ease your pain, Mrs. Baker. You will go to sleep — you want to go to sleep, don’t you?”

“Oh, yes, oh, yes,” she answered. “I’m so tired — an’ I can never sleep. Maybe, too, I’ll dream of Tom — my poor little boy. He was such a winsome boy — such a fine, good little chap. D’ye remember the long nights he sat up with me, givin’ me the medicine and puttin’ the hot cloths on my chest — Oh, deary me, deary me, my bonny boy! Sometimes I see him laughin’ an’ happy — but ’most always he comes to me sufferin’ — and I stretch out my poor, miserable old fingers to him, an’ I can’t touch him nor get nigh him, docther, docther! ’Tis then my poor heart is like to crack in two — nor can I do e’er a thing for him but pray — on’y pray, pray, pray!”

Mollie’s hands were clutching at her heaving bosom. Not even now did John Rollinson look at her — he dared not.

“That is everything, Mrs. Baker,” he said very tenderly. “Pray for him — a mother’s prayers would make a ladder to heaven for any soul.”

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"Thru, docther! Pray to God it may be thru for my poor Tom! Mollie here is the good girl—I don't be blamin' her—but sure she isn't like one's own. An' sometimes the terrible fear comes over me that I ain't a-doin' what's right, takin' her few hard-earned dollars—"

"Dr. Rollinson!" interrupted Mollie Farrell, in a quivering voice, "will you not give her the medicine now? She is raving—she is delirious."

"Raise her head," he answered.

Mollie did so. He placed the powder on her tongue, held the cup of water to her lips—and then the girl softly laid her down upon the pillow.

There was silence. John Rollinson stood beside his patient, watching the gradual relaxation of the strained features, the smoothing of the furrowed brow, the general yielding to repose. Those few moments were what Mollie needed. The face of the poor woman grew peaceful and quiet—but the shadow was still upon it. Man and girl alike knew that shadow.

"It might be better for her if she would lie in bed," said Mollie in low tones. "But she cannot bear to leave the sofa—she seems to stifle in the inner room."

John Rollinson made no comment. Behind his glasses his eyes were shining and as he turned his head she caught the brightness of them. She stirred restlessly. That silence was eloquent, yet neither of those two could have found words for what it meant. The time was not yet. At last Mollie, as if that steady gaze com-

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pelled an answering glance, looked at him. The flame of red that had died down crimsoned cheek and brow again.

"Well?" she asked, and there was a hint of defiance in the interrogation.

"It is *not* well," he answered slowly. "I have been very ignorant of many things."

"Your patient is asleep," she said in an evasive, low voice. His eyebrows went up, almost imperceptibly.

"I know it. She will not awake for two or three hours — and when she does, there will be comparatively no pain — until the end. She will die to-morrow."

He spoke gravely, almost coldly — professionally, in fact, as if he were stating some trifling occurrence. Mollie Farrell was not used to that tone, and it made her nervous. John Rollinson did not know he had used that tone, for his steady glance held hers, and she could not — she would not — take her eyes away.

"It is late," he said then. "Who is coming to relieve you?"

"Mrs. McCabe stayed here until eleven," she answered. "She has to be up at daybreak — and it would not have been right to keep her any longer —"

"Does that mean —" a gleam of anger shot across his face — "they allow you — a young girl like you to watch alone at the bedside of a woman who may die at any moment? I cannot believe it!" He turned toward the door. "If there is no one who will stay here for charity's sake, I shall find one who will do it for money — one who —"

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“Dr. Rollinson! Wait!” Her words arrested his footsteps — she followed him, holding out her hand, beseechingly. “Stay one instant,” and then as he looked at her she went on rapidly, “you are wronging them, you know you are. They volunteered — three of them; perhaps some one will come in before you leave. But I would not — I will not — are you listening to me, Dr. Rollinson? — I will not have them — not any one of them. This is *my* place — mine only, right here, watching alone at the bedside of a woman who is dying alone, helpless, childless.”

“I know what you mean,” he said, “but it is not true. I have learned from her words what you have been doing for her. A child like you with the burden of home duties upon your shoulders and the illness of a mother —”

“Hush, Dr. Rollinson.” She was near enough to him now, and laid one nervous hand lightly on his black coat sleeve, looking up into his face with something of the old wistful childishness he remembered. “You are angry? And why? You will not be if you think a moment. Dan helps, poor fellow — every penny he gets he sends. It pays her rent and over, and the little that is left for me to do is not much after all. She is old and her wants are few. No one knows about it but Dan and I — unless, perhaps, like to-night, she has told some one when off guard. Ah, Dr. Rollinson, go back to that poor little creature I was five years ago. You were not angry at her then when she tried to do what was right — do not be angry at me now for what is but

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an act of simple justice." She held out both her hands and he took them in his, fascinated. The light that had dazzled him — when the child to whom she alluded had told him of the place she would find for herself in the great world — shone on face and in eyes, and he yielded to the woman's spell as he had yielded to the child's. "I have tried to be what I said I would be — not a judgment, but a blessing — not a curse, but a joy. Can't you understand, can't you, can't you? It is for Dan — to atone for Dan. I am trying to do right — we are both trying, poor Dan and I. Do not be angry —"

"Mollie!" said John Rollinson. "Mollie, Mollie!"

He dropped the hands she had given him — he could say no other word, but stood, struggling with an emotion that threatened to overpower him. He put up his hand to his forehead and brushed the hair away; he straightened his glasses; he pulled his watch out of his pocket and looked at it — every action mechanically performed.

"I — I understand you," he said then. "Still I dislike very much to leave you here alone. It is not good for a girl like you — women's nerves are not of the best. If she dies —"

"I am only young in years," said Mollie, bravely, "but old in wisdom. And believe or not, as you choose, but I would not at this instant change places with any living soul — no matter how rich or how favored of fortune. No, not with a queen upon her throne. This is *my* night, Dr. Rollinson — my night and Dan's."

He left her. When he reached the threshold, he

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paused, turned, looked — looked at the drooping figure, the downcast head, the tightly locked hands. He dared not trust himself to speak. He had seen the real Mollie Farrell.

* * * * *

He went away.

Ah, yes — but what did he take with him? No consciousness of love, as yet — those who treasure highest the great gift of love are slow to realize its coming, dazzled at the knowledge, jealous of its possession. But on that walk homeward there rose before him such a vision of goodness as enraptured his soul. And its sublimity raised him to the height of that which he contemplated. And he thought in his own heart how weak he was, who had always considered himself so strong. The one feeling that possessed him in his hour of knowledge — which as yet was not realization — was that he might look unashamed into that girl's pure eyes. Well has it been said that the ancients spent their lives digging and delving for the philosopher's stone — that stone which changes baser metals to pure gold — overlooking it in their eager search; overlooking the fact that within his heart every man must carry it, within his soul every man must treasure it, and his body must be its casket.

For its name is purity.

John Rollinson knew — and the knowledge was actual pain — that all advantages on which he had prided himself were worldly ones, and that here they dwindled into nothingness. His thoughts ran on disconnectedly,

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coherent only to himself, and yet all bearing upon the one subject. If God had made a soul with human love and human charity in its crystal depths, with such purity as he had seen in those uplifted eyes. . . . The wonder of it clung to him, followed him. Self-sacrifice? God had asked nothing of His chosen but self-sacrifice. And here it was—in this girl's daily life. Here was self-sacrifice: in the work of this girl's hands. Humble work? True. Was not Christ's work humble? Painful? Surely. Had not Christ endured agony? And to His elect He left His portion.

As one stands amazed at the sudden answer to a prayer; as one pauses, mute, at a wonderful display of nature's power; as one listens, thrilling in every nerve, to a burst of song that seems to swell from angelic spheres—so, too, did John Rollinson stand before the vision of Mollie Farrell.

“A girl who makes a man glad his mother was a woman!” Those were his own words coming back to him. He stopped, in the very middle of the street, and took off his hat, repeating them and other words of his that night, raising his eyes to the star-gemmed sky.

“A mother's prayers make a ladder to heaven for any soul!” he whispered. “Beautiful, misunderstood, unhappy mother—were you such a girl as Mollie Farrell is? Oh, make a ladder to heaven for me, my mother; let down the chain of your prayers, dear heart, that I may grasp it and mount thereby to you, to you!”

CHAPTER XIV

A DAUGHTER OF DUTY

“**T**HIS is my night — my night and Dan’s.”

John Rollinson could not sleep. He had a small volume in his desk — a collection of spiritual thoughts by a great Irish Jesuit — which he resorted to always when distressed or annoyed. To-night they gave him no comfort; the sentences were meaningless.

“Exercise your will power!” was his oft-given advice. “Exercise your will power! That is half the battle for a man’s well-being.”

He was putting his own theory into practice now, and was to prove how much easier things are said than done. Generally, as soon as his head touched the pillow, sleep found him, — unbroken, save when the little electric bell in the wall above him roused him to night duty. He put away his book, turned out the light, and composed himself, devoutly hoping that in a few moments slumber might visit him and help him to forget.

But visions come in the darkness that are never present in the light — and before his wakeful eyes he saw that humble room, that worn face, with the gray shadow upon it, the inspired countenance of the girl.

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He watched with fascinated, unblinking orbs, the passing of Mrs. Baker; saw the fear of death grow upon Mollie's features — and then again would come the words that gave the lie to that which he was imagining: "This is my night — my night and Dan's." Persistently, repeatedly, they rang in his ears. He tossed wearily from side to side for an hour; then, at last, he arose, dressed, and sat down to reason the thing out philosophically, if he could.

With all those who suffered John Rollinson was gentle and sympathetic — especially the weaker and the helpless ones. So now thinking of that long and weary vigil — so long and so weary a vigil for one so young, he felt that if God needed this atonement, He would surely accept it, and in accepting bless those who made it.

"Dan is worthy of his sister, after all," he said aloud. "I did not think he would be — But could any man help living up to such a girl's belief in him?"

John Rollinson was not given to introspection. He led too active and too even a life ever to want to cross-examine himself. His days were all too short for the work he set himself to do, and his nights the dreamless, peaceful ones of a tired, healthy man. He did not seek practice, yet practice in plenty came to him, and at twenty-eight he stood where many a man who has striven harder finds himself at forty. He failed, therefore, because of the very routine and sameness of his life, to recognize the new element which was entering

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into it — he did not try to analyze the impatience, the discontent so foreign to his nature. He had, he told himself, often been disturbed by a tale of suffering or of privation — he was willing to attribute this emotion now to his sympathy for a girl of heroic endurance, and let it go at that.

So he paced his room restlessly, his heart — because of this sympathy! — yearning over that dark-faced, dark-eyed maiden, so utterly alone, and yet so brave! Again he blamed himself for not adopting stronger methods. There were many, indeed, who would have shared that vigil with her at his request; if not for sweet charity's sake, at least for the money which —

“Money? You wrong them,” Mollie had said. They would do a good deal for money, but more for the love of God. Why had he not asked them in that Name — nay, compelled some one to go to her, to stay with her.

He lay down at last, fully dressed, and fell asleep, but even his rest was troubled, and the first gray light of dawn woke him. A cold plunge and breakfast made him feel better physically, but his mind was not a whit less perturbed as he betook himself to Mrs. Baker's once more. She was conscious when he entered, and Mrs. Reilly had just made her a cup of tea. She expressed no surprise at seeing the young man so early — he was like Father Laurence, apt to come at any hour he thought his services were needed. Mrs. Baker greeted him with a faint smile — she was almost beyond

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words. And then he took the cup from Mrs. Reilly's hands, and held her gray head on his arm, thinking how Mollie had rendered her a similar service. He brought the cup to her lips gently, as gently as Mollie herself had done, nor did he try to understand the quiet sense of satisfaction it gave him to do even this much. The dying eyes of the woman spoke for her. He laid her back upon the pillow with a few comforting words, and then made a sign to Mrs. Reilly. She followed him to the head of the stairs, scarcely prepared, after the gentleness of his manner inside, for the abrupt way in which he flung a question at her.

"Where is Miss Farrell?" he asked.

"She was here, sir, till just this minute, when I kem in an' let her run home. She was afraid her mother'd be awake an' miss her, an' besides she wants to leave word with her friend, Mrs. Warden, that she ain't goin' downtown to-day, seein' Mrs. Baker's so near the end. A better-hearted girl never lived than Mollie Farrell."

"Yes," said John Rollinson. "Did you know that she stayed here all night with Mrs. Baker? That she stayed here alone, and that the woman was likely to die at any moment? No matter how independent she is, she's only a young girl. Some of you should have made provision to sit with her. I cannot tell you how astonished I was to find her here last night when I came over. Especially — under the circumstances. My people have disappointed me."

He spoke quite calmly, but Mrs. Reilly flushed.

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What! Not come up to Dr. Rollinson's expectations? His words carried weight, for she was one of "his people," and she felt it a serious thing to be under the ban of his displeasure.

"Sure, an' she wanted to be left, sir. An' when Mollie Farrell wants a thing, she generally gets it. Besides, 'tain't the first time she's sat up alone with Mrs. Baker. The whole world knows —" alas, for poor Mollie and her desire for concealment! — "that she's been supportin' the woman and carin' for her ever sence she's been able to scratch one penny over the other. She told Mrs. Baker it's Dan's doings — but that's on'y half likely, for the haporth a wan of us knows where Dan is, or what he does be doin'. You never heard yourself, now, did you, Dr. Rollinson?"

No idle curiosity prompted the question — rather the true feminine spirit which seeks to avoid an unpleasant or unanswerable argument. But the young man frowned.

"I don't know where Dan is and I don't care. It strikes me as being rather peculiar that I should hear of Miss Farrell and Mrs. Baker now when it is too late to remedy it. You people did not want to tell me; that's it," irritably. "A sensible woman like you — Well, well, let's say no more about it."

He caught himself up quickly, for Mrs. Reilly's face, seen in the light streaming from the open door out into the hallway, had flushed, and her eyes opened wide. Dr. Rollinson was the most good-natured of men — and what was in this to exasperate him now —

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“I suppose Miss Farrell will have to make arrangements for the funeral also?” he continued much more mildly. “You know Mrs. Baker’s going to die, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir — any wan wid two eyes in her head would know that. An’ as for the funeral, I haven’t the least knowledge. You see, Dr. Rollinson, you don’t understand. It’s a while back — a matter of three years or more, that Mollie’s took charge of Mrs. Baker. The ould lady herself has been mighty uppish about it, an’ as for Mollie — Well, Mollie’d give you her heart’s blood, but don’t come next or nigh her with questions. No wan dast interfere with that girl, nor go contrary to her, nor ask her what she’d be goin’ to do. Her own mother told me she never so much as —”

“Why, Mrs. Reilly, you seem to think I’ve been blaming you in some way,” said John Rollinson, with his pleasantest smile. He had, indeed, been blaming her, but he saw that she was hurt, and he did not want this conversation to reach Mollie Farrell’s ears — as it would, he knew, with embellishments, if it were carried much further. An idea had come to him while he was speaking. He resolved that pecuniary outlay, as far as Mrs. Baker was concerned, was over for Mollie Farrell — despite what satisfaction she would take in still further making a martyr of herself.

“We will forget all about it,” he continued. “I understand just how you feel — and I see now that you couldn’t interfere. Not knowing the facts — and know-

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ing *you*, Mrs. Reilly, and how good hearted you are, I thought it strange that you would allow her to stay alone all night—under the circumstances, of course. Let the matter drop. Some people are born to have their own way in this world, Mrs. Reilly.”

He was one of them. These words, accompanied by that pleasant smile of his, sent the warm flush to Mrs. Reilly's face once more. They made her resolve never to disappoint him again in his expectations of seeing her wherever help was necessary. We are all children in our desire for praise and appreciation. Some strange and stubborn natures there may be who strive the fiercer against heavy odds, and in the face of condemnation and disapproval; but the great majority of us do our best work when we feel that it will be scanned by friendly eye.

John Rollinson went home and wrote to Parsons, the undertaker, instructing him to take charge after the woman's death; telling him also that he would defray all expenses only on condition that his name was not made known. When the note was sealed and addressed, he sat quite still, his eyes fixed on vacancy for a full five minutes. Then he threw his head back, and a look of resolution deepened and hardened the grave lines in his pleasant face.

“That's over,” he said. “There's a chapter in my life turned down. The page is marked through; more than that, it's torn out: I do not know why you came across my path, Mollie Farrell—or having once gone

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out of it, why you came back again. I am disturbed when I see or meet you. Therefore I shall not see you or meet you, for I am a busy man, with my life's best work to be done, and to do it I must feel at peace with myself. You and I are as far away from each other as the two poles, yet you are a source of discomfort; you make me dissatisfied. A very beautiful character — that, doubtless. But we are strangers and shall remain so."

He made the resolution for himself alone, of course. He did not have to try to avoid Mollie Farrell, for never would she willingly come in contact with him. In the days and the weeks and the months that followed he heard of her often — with unconcern, for he had resolved that the influence she exercised over him must be broken, and having a strong will, he succeeded in banishing her. By-and-by another name began to be coupled with hers — the name of Sister Raphael. And once Mrs. McCabe gave voice to the rumor that Mollie, when her mother no longer needed her, would go with Sister Raphael altogether. John Rollinson was glad when he heard this. It would be a good life for the girl. She was above her station in so far as the subtle "self" was concerned; she was pure, brave, noble of heart and sentiment — yes, the religious life was meet for such as she, who understood trial and sorrow so well.

He did not linger more than he could help — had he not resolved to put her entirely out of his mind? — on

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his self-communings on that night when he had anticipated her marriage with one of her own class; of her future with a man who would not appreciate her. No. If he thought of marriage in connection with her during these days, it was rather with a feeling of relief that she would not have to face the dangers of that state of life; that she would live up to the splendid grace of pure womanhood that was hers in an eminent degree.

And what of Mollie herself?

A girl on whom people in sore trouble leaned. Never of many words, the touch of her hand was ease. She was one to profit by good example, and Sister Raphael, who moved among Father Laurence's people like an angel of light, taught the girl a great deal. The lessons were given in silence, and they were learned in silence.

And yet, although her people cared for her, and relied on her, they did not realize her worth. She was no saint, this Mollie Farrell. She was human as the saints were before they cast out, by discipline, fasting, and prayer, the torments of self-will and self-love. In her own way she held her people in affectionate regard—but she knew one thing: she did not love them with the love that Sister Raphael had for them—Sister Raphael, who could look through the grime of earth down into a man's very soul. They were her people and she clung to them. But the great sympathy and feeling that were the actual Mollie Farrell never came to the surface, and they, who gave love impulsively,

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could not look below the surface for what was not apparent. She knew all this — she felt it; she knew that while she was necessary to them, she could drop out of their lives without causing them more than a quickly vanishing pang.

And yet there was so much for her to do — so much for her to unlearn as well as learn. Before she could win the love of her people, she must let down the barriers of her own great heart and allow its affection to pour forth. And to her nature this would mean torture. No — she held to her self-repression; she held her own emotions well in check. She would clasp still farther the band of immobility about her soul, and keep it there.

When John Rollinson thought of her now, it was with a sensation of the most profound respect — as of a being set apart — satisfied that she had made up her mind to her future, pleased that she would be free from all cares save those she undertook voluntarily or by obedience. True, the memory of that silent vigil of hers persisted in returning; the memory of that night when he had clasped those thin hands, and spoken her name, fascinated by the glowing light in her eyes. But after a while even that memory began to fade, so emphatically can we impress our will upon the secret longings of our heart. If we tell ourselves a thing often enough, we will eventually become convinced of the truth of it. She would, most certainly, always occupy a singular position in his mind — and yet of what interest were her words, her actions, to him?

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He believed all this. John Rollinson was almost persuaded that the strangely fascinating Mollie Farrell had been a dream, when an event occurred which tore the veil from his eyes forever.

Yet interesting as this event is, and exciting, things of importance to others of our story were transpiring in the interval. We chronicle the beginning of them in the next chapter : the beginning of the marvelous workings of the will of God. Anxious as we may be to continue Mollie's further history, we will take up this other for a little while.

CHAPTER XV

PAIN AND PATIENCE

“**S**AY, Edith, John was telling me an awfully fine story about that Mollie Farrell we met some days ago — the one that was here, remember?”

Edith Selleck looked up from the piano. She was trying a piece of new music, and Mac had wandered into the room to listen. She smiled at him now, but kept on playing very softly, so that he could continue the conversation if he so desired. He leaned against the instrument, watching her fingers.

“You know when he left here the other night?”

She nodded.

“He was called to an old woman he’s been in the habit of attending. The girl —”

Edith stopped and swung around on the stool. An expression of childish amusement crossed her lovely face.

“Oh Mac, Mac, write a story and call it ‘My Paragon — and the Lady!’ Do, do! It is the girl again? Dear, dear me! Of course she was there! Of course she was with the poor old soul! An angel of mercy! And John Rollinson is charmed anew. Mac, why don’t you put your Chevalier Bayard, your Sir

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Galahad, upon the right track? Discover to him his heart. Don't you know he's in love with Miss Farrell?"

"Oh, come off, Edith," said Mac. "Why do you talk like that?"

"Don't you believe me?"

"No, I don't."

"That's queer," carelessly. "Well, men are not observant as a rule." She turned back to the piano.

"Would you like to hear the rest? I thought you might be interested, seeing that you know her."

"There is more?"

"Yes," said Mac, "there is more." And then he told it, simply as John Rollinson had told it to him. Edith Selleck, with her elbows propped on the music rack, her chin on her upturned palms, listened without interruption to the story of Mrs. Baker and Mollie Farrell, which included, as well, the story of Dan Farrell's unlucky blow. She listened to that brief tale of Mollie's sacrifice, and made no comment. When he had finished, she sat up straight and looked at him, her eyes shining.

"And yet you say John Rollinson does not love this girl?"

"Edith, it is impossible. He —"

"Is a fool," said Edith, in a sharp tone.

"But —" began Mac, astonished. He did not know what to make of her, she looked at him so strangely. She rose and left the room, and a short while afterward

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the house. She felt that what she needed was space and air — to be alone on a boundless desert somewhere — to feel herself alone with some greater power, some force above her.

Where would she go? There came, following close on that impulse for freedom, a wish to see Mollie Farrell. Yes, if she could but see her and apologize to her for the very thoughts that had, in depreciating the girl, belittled herself. Apologize to her? For what? She had done nothing, said nothing, for which apology was necessary. But she was suffering, and she felt that Mollie Farrell's face would alleviate the suffering; there was a discord in her brain that Mollie Farrell's deep tones could soothe into harmony. Oh, if she but knew her better! A girl like her, a girl who could make such quiet, silent sacrifices and endure so much, must have taught herself a great deal that no modern education can give. She had learned in the school of life! The school of life! Those words had always been meaningless to Edith. Was she entering that school now?

And suddenly there seemed to stretch before the girl two paths. One she knew well. She had already tasted of its pleasures. The world of homage, and satisfaction of sense, of estheticism, delicacy, refinement, evasion of serious thought. She had had it all — but some tiny, hungering voice within her protested. Where did the voice come from? It was not that of conscience, surely. She had never wilfully wronged a human being; even in the trifling things of life, if she were betrayed

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into irritability or unkindness, she had striven always to make amends. It was this sweetness of character that had made her father's young brother look upon her with such admiring eyes.

And why not be satisfied? Who or what could give more than her life offered her? John Rollinson? A half-mocking smile parted her lips. John Rollinson — at best a fancy! She knew it. She wanted his affection, because, in the very fulness of her existence she had not learned self-denial. She wanted this because she wanted it — a sufficient reason for getting anything heretofore. And if she did not get it — well, in a short while, probably, another and newer attraction would supersede it.

John Rollinson's love! No, it was *not* that. It was the hungering voice again — the longing for those days filled to the brim with serious, calm enjoyment, those days which John Rollinson tasted in their completeness. It was his larger life, it was his elimination of self that she craved. Work, he would tell her, work, work, work. True, but on every side she was frustrated. What would the poor people of whom Mrs. Martyn and Miss Partridge talked, think of her? They would look at her with strange eyes, with suspicious eyes. Why should she work among them? To be like the good women whom she knew — content to talk fairs and circles and meetings and bazaars and exchanges, and relate soul-harrowing tales of this or that unfortunate — They did good. That was not what she wanted. If the mere

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doing of good did not please her, what was it she desired?
A motive?

A motive? She turned from the contemplation of that upper world, that pleasure-filled life of hers; and of the underworld with its misery, which she did not care to enter. There was something encompassing these two worlds: a living mystery that she could not understand.

“Make me to see!” her heart yearned. “Why can I not see?”

A voiceless prayer — the longing of her soul.

She had turned east, setting her face toward Mollie Farrell, in the direction of the thoughts here set down, word for word as they came to her. She reached Second Avenue at last and hailed a passing car. It was going down town. She walked its entire length before she found a seat close to the front door. People looked at her curiously. She was very beautiful in her rich attire, with her face shining out like a flower above the dark-brown of her dress, the pensive expression of her delicate countenance making it only the more interesting. She was utterly unconscious of the covert scrutiny of her fellow-passengers. And so from block to block went the car. Men and women reached their destination and others took their vacated places. But whether they came or went, the girl sat quietly erect, her eyes staring out of the opposite window, her small hands folded passively in her lap.

What roused her first she did not know. Perhaps the sudden stopping of the car or the lurch it gave when the

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motorman started it too quickly. Edith turned her head. The car was well-filled. A form clad in black came slowly up the aisle. Edith glanced at the woman casually, wondering at her strange garb, and as she dropped into the seat opposite their eyes met. They held each other's gaze a moment, and then the woman looked away.

It would be hard to paint in words the calm face that shone from under that encircling black coif with its white headband — a face that had brought love and joy and hope and tenderness to many an aching heart. Here was no self-seeking; here was no ignorance of the world and its evils which makes the features of very young women in religion as the white petals of a blossom, unwritten on, unmarked, uncomprehending. It was a face that told a story of knowledge and strength and innocence. Edith Selleck felt a quiver vibrate through her entire body.

What was the secret of this woman's soul?

And yet how to describe her? Who could describe such a woman as this was? A woman who had spent thirty years among the poor and lowly and ignorant, who had opened her great and generous heart to suffering humanity? Words fail. One cannot see features when the soul shines through, and so there are no words to describe that face which Edith Selleck looked at, and turned her eyes from, and glanced at again, and away, and back, the hungering, tiny voice within her suddenly clamorous in its questioning, in its protest.

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One by one the passengers left the car. Edith did not know where it was bringing her, she was unconscious of her surroundings. They were going through the down-town business streets — on the way to City Hall, past the Tombs. As they neared the big gray building the nun rose, and for a moment Edith felt, with a sickening sense of disappointment, that she was going to get off. But no. Some impulse had moved her to cross the aisle, so that she could get a better look at the prison. There was no one near. Edith moistened her lips with her tongue, and her face flushed a little as she leaned across the space that separated them.

“That is the Tombs, isn't it?” she asked.

“Yes,” said the nun.

She had, in spite of the quiet gravity of manner, a peculiar expression of the lips when she spoke, the upper going up at one corner revealing the white teeth before her mouth returned to its calm lines. Edith glanced out of the car window.

“I don't believe I have ever seen it before,” she said. “And that is the Bridge of Sighs?”

“That is the Bridge of Sighs,” answered the other.

“You — you do not mind me speaking to you like this?” asked Edith, in an embarrassed manner.

“Oh, no!” and she smiled. “People often speak to me. I am always glad to tell them anything I can.”

“I wonder if it is from the same reason that I have done so,” said the girl, impulsively. Her acquired indifference, her self-possession, left her. The realness

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of this woman, with the calm face, the young, sweet smile, called to the realness in her. So do we change by the company we keep.

“I have often been asked if that is the Tombs,” said the Sister, quietly.

“Oh!” said Edith, “That is not the reason I spoke — to find out that. You are a Catholic nun, aren’t you?”

“I am.”

“Will you believe that you are the first one I have ever spoken to in my life?”

The Sister looked at her critically.

“It does not seem as if our lines were cast in the same places,” she said.

To Edith, these words, coming upon her harsh communings and self-condemnation, seemed a reproach. The delicate color left her cheeks.

“If you knew how true your words are!” she murmured. She stared straight before her and began to speak rapidly. “You have been where people needed you; you have been where you have made people glad. The shame of it that I have never in my life lightened another’s burdens, or helped one single soul! There is no one on earth who can say, ‘I owe her a thought of gratitude.’”

Intense feeling were in those last words. The Religious glanced at her keenly. It was a glance that spoke volumes. It questioned. It challenged. It questioned the girl’s sincerity, it challenged her honesty. It was

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doubtful and it was believing. Just a second that glance lasted — odd because of the mildness of the eyes that gave it forth.

“Yet you are a good, and as I take it, a cultured girl,” said the nun, then. “You exaggerate, very likely. Are you in trouble?”

“Yes.”

“Trouble that you can tell a stranger — one whom you will never see again — one who hears hundreds of worse troubles than you can possibly dream there are in the world? One who perhaps can help you? I merely ask. I do not want to force your confidence.”

“No — you will not. I cannot describe it. I want to see another life. I want to know people. If there is a God, I want to find Him round about me — in the lives of the people I know. I don't want to feel that He has made me rich and you poor; that He has given me money to keep or throw away as I please, and deprived you of it and made you suffer for its lack. There is a deeper meaning to classes and masses than I am capable of solving. Where is the answer?”

She fastened her eyes upon the Religious.

“In your own heart,” was the reply.

“In my own heart!” echoed Edith. “But my own heart is tormenting me — it will give me no rest. I am not satisfied. I want something very much, and yet I wonder, if it were given me, would I be satisfied. I have had everything I ever wanted — everything, except one. It is denied me now, but I daresay I could get it if I de-

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sired it greatly." She spoke with the supreme confidence in herself that comes with the gratification of worldly wishes. "I do not know whether I want it or not, and at least I realize that it is too great a thing to be taken lightly — that is, I could not give it back once I accepted it." She looked at her once more and strangely. "You have the answer to my question in your face. The mystery of life is in your eyes. What is it?"

"If you are free to come with me, I shall show it to you," said the nun, gravely. "But one thing. You spoke before as if poverty made for wretchedness, wealth for happiness. That the fact that you had money to throw away and I suffered for lack of it was an unjust distinction. My child, if you knew how sorry we, who see so much, are for the poor rich people of the world! Poverty and riches! The first is God's own country; the second — It must be a great temptation to take those pleasant things that lie on every side when one is rich."

"One gets tired," said Edith, wearily. "That is no answer to my question."

"Ah, your question! Can you spare an hour or two to learn what you desire to know?" She glanced up at the big clock on the City Hall. "It is now half-past one —"

"If I reach home by seven this evening," began Edith. Her voice had an undercurrent of relief in it. "You will permit me to go with you?"

"If you want to come," and again she smiled. "I

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cannot say that you will see pleasant sights, but come if you honestly wish an answer."

"I do honestly wish it," said Edith Selleck. "I shall go."

She did not ask where — she simply placed herself under the control of the stronger nature — or rather the hand of God directed one and led the other. It was a long journey. First, they crossed the Brooklyn Bridge; then there was a seemingly interminable trolley-ride, with transfers so numerous that Edith lost count of them, and at last a walk through a bare country road. By this time the Religious had led the conversation into more easy channels, and Edith Selleck was happy. She was no longer proud, self-sufficient; instead she was enjoying the domination of a superior. She listened to her, so calm, so unruffled by the petty cares that fret those of the outside world, and at last she commented upon it.

"You remind me of a saying I once heard," she said shyly. "The beauty of the King's daughter is within."

The Sister looked at her without answering — and Edith felt that possibly she had no right to say the words.

"That is what you are, isn't it?" she asked hastily. "A daughter of the King?"

"His spouse as well as His daughter," answered the nun, briefly.

"Don't you — please tell me — don't you ever regret anything?"

"Yes — that we have but one life to yield in His service."

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Edith was silent.

“You will understand this better in a little while,” went on the Sister. “That big building in front of us is the City Hospital. I visit here once a week — every Friday afternoon. There are many Catholics among the inmates, who are of all creeds and colors, as you can imagine. And here, in this building — look at it, my dear — you are going to learn the mystery of life.” She paused with her hand upon the iron door and glanced half sadly into the beautiful face. “You and I may never meet again. It often happens that I come in touch with people in this way — people speak to me, stop me on the street to ask me questions. I never see them afterward. But in the future, when you are very happy, try to remember the poor souls you will meet to-day, and do good where your hand may find it to do.”

They passed on and into the well-kept hall. An attendant led them through four or five connecting rooms, and left them, with a few smiling words, at the foot of a flight of narrow stairs. The nun, of course, took precedence, and as her head became visible to those on the upper landing, a low murmur of voices reached Edith Selleck’s listening ears.

“How do you do, Sister Raphael?”

“You’re early to-day, Sister. Have you brought my prayer-book?”

Edith caught the flashing of a row of white teeth, the glimpse of a figure in light blue. Another figure in the

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same attire — presumably the one who had first greeted her — was moving rapidly down the hall. These were some of the nurses, then. She waited while Sister Raphael dove down into the capacious recesses of an enormous black bag she carried and handed the expectant girl the book she had asked for. There was a pleased murmur of thanks. Then Sister Raphael turned to Edith.

“Here is a young lady come to take a look at your hospital,” she said. “This is Miss Evans, one of the nurses.”

Edith bowed her acknowledgments. The young nurse took in Edith’s appearance a little wonderingly. What a beautiful face! What a high-bred bearing! And — being a woman — what an exquisite gown!

“You will find it different to visit a hospital with Sister Raphael,” she said in a friendly manner.

“I have never been in any sort of a hospital before,” said Edith, almost indifferently. She was thinking of the nun’s words. “In the future, when you are very happy.” In the future . . . when she was very happy. In the future —

“If I can show you anything, if there is anything you care to see,” said Miss Evans, addressing Sister Raphael, “I will gladly be of service.”

Sister Raphael nodded. They were going through a beautifully clean, light dormitory now. The white beds were all occupied, and as Edith Selleck walked behind the Sister one thing struck forcibly through her indifference, and roused her to keen attention. She became

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alive, receptive, observing. Every one looked at the Religious so eagerly — old and young gazed up as the nun approached, not with the curiosity which might be expected of people who have little to break the monotony of their lives, but, it seemed to Edith, with pleading. She spoke to all — only a word or two, but they seemed to be waiting for that word and to grow happier for it. Edith watched, puzzled. What was the reason? Surely they did not anticipate the receiving of treasures from that unsightly black bag. The girl noted the objects that Sister Raphael produced; a tiny religious picture, a scapular, a pair of wooden beads — things of no earthly value. Edith had solved that much if she had known it — things of no earthly value.

“I want you to see this child, my dear,” began the Sister, in a low voice. “Hers is a sad case — I will tell you of it later. This is my little Annie!” she said aloud, in a loving tone. “My dear little Annie!” She took the frail hands — clawlike, rather, in their extreme attenuation — that were thrown out as she approached, and held them. “Tell this young lady how old you are,” she went on.

“Fifteen,” said the child. “The young lady” had no charms for Annie; her pale-blue eyes transfigured her sallow, sickly face; they were fastened on Sister Raphael with a look of deepest joy.

“And she has been here almost two years and a half, with a lame back. And she has prepared about twelve little children for their first confession and as many

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more for communion and confirmation. Isn't she a brave girl—doing all that with her back aching away, trying to keep her from accomplishing anything? And now, in a little while, God is going to cure the lame back—”

“For Easter, the doctor says,” said Annie, in a weak voice.

“So very soon? Isn't that splendid? Isn't it beautiful? No more ache or pain, no more suffering; nothing but joy, and you will see the dear Lord face to face, Annie—”

“Yes,” said the child. She drew the hand she held close to her breast. “Yes,” she breathed again. “And mamma—I shall see my own, own mamma! *I shall see my mother, Sister.*”

The last words belonged rather to heaven than to earth, because of the rapture in them. And after they were uttered, a quiet hush, almost, one would say, a holy hush, fell upon that dormitory with its burden of suffering humanity, as if the wing of an angel had swept aside the sounds of earth, as the heavenly messenger carried that sentence and all it meant to the throne of God. The silence lasted only a single instant, but it had come, and it touched in its coming more than one heart. The nun stood looking at the child and the expression on her face would be hard to read. She had learned to control her expression, but this time she found it difficult. After a while with a few tender words she turned away and her eyes encountered Edith Selleck's

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averted face. She had not heard the few low-spoken sentences of the Sister before she left the child's side.

"One of the saddest cases I ever knew," said Sister Raphael, then. "A bad fall when she was a baby brought on spinal trouble, which was neglected until a few years ago. Her own mother died when she was an infant and the house is full of her stepmother's children. The woman was good enough to her, I suppose," went on the nun, "but where there are so many others — Annie is a little saint."

"She suffers?"

"Agony! Think of it! And not one wish, not one regret, have I ever heard from that child since I have known her — until to-day." The tremor in the low voice showed how deeply she was affected. "Imagine how that wish must have lived in her heart all these years, and now that the appointed time is come for its fulfillment she cannot keep it to herself! She will see her own mamma — her *own* mother! How that longing and yearning must have been burning in her ardent little soul."

"It is pitiable," said Edith, in a hushed voice.

"It is beautiful," said Sister Raphael. "Beautiful. We can readily suppose that the poor mother, detained in purgatory, has found release through these years of prayer and the pain which her little daughter has endured, and will await her at the door of the heavenly kingdom —" she broke off hurriedly. Edith laid her hand upon her arm.

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“Do not stop now. I so want to understand.”

“You are learning.”

“Give me some holy water, Sister,” said a very old lady, a convalescent, coming up to them. She was a queer little toothless old lady, with sparse white locks cut short about her ears. She bowed down as Sister Raphael sprinkled holy water on her from the bottle she carried, and made the sign of the cross.

“God’s blessing be about you, Sister dear,” she said. And then she turned, smiling ingratiatingly to the beautiful young lady. “The sight of Sister Raphael makes the heart sing like it used to when I was young, and went down along the lovely roads of dear old Ireland to meet my bouchelleen bawn. Ah, them were the days! When the heart is young, but the world is green and gold—the very colors of my own sweet land!”

“Some of us never grow old,” said Sister Raphael. “And in heaven we’ll be young forever.”

“Glory be to God!” said the old lady. “You’ll hardly be knowin’ me then, Sистер. ’Twas I that was as handsome a colleen as ever stepped from me own place home.”

Sister Raphael smiled in her pleasant way.

“We’ll know people there by other things than looks,” she said, and passed on. Another old lady stopped her to tell how badly her rheumatism had been the past week. A small picture made her happy. And then Miss Evans came back to them along the corridor, her arms full of towels which she was putting away.

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“ You were to see Annie, Sister ? ”

“ Yes, poor child — she will not live much longer.”

“ A month — maybe two. I see Nancy was telling you her woes. Isn't it surprising how hard it is to bear a little pain, and when the big pain comes, it is so much easier,” she smiled. “ When one thinks of Annie's suffering, and then of Nancy's small aches — ”

“ Well, well, each one's discomfort is a mountain,” said Sister Raphael.

“ Until the mountain comes,” answered Miss Evans. “ I wished particularly to catch you before you went into the next room. You might just try to get at the woman in the first bed. She's to go under an operation to-morrow, and she's a hard case, but she won't look at a soul or speak a word. The chances are all against her, too.”

Sister Raphael found the woman, who lay staring with sullen dark eyes at the ceiling, and would not speak when the nun addressed her. Edith Selleck stood at the foot of the bed. Sister Raphael asked her a few questions. She would not answer, but her eyes left the ceiling, wandered downward, fell on Edith Selleck's face, lingered there. It was such a lovely face, and it was so softened now, and the blue eyes were so tender and pitying. The woman stared at her. Her lips parted.

“ Who are you ? ” she asked in a whisper.

Edith moved nearer, until she stood beside Sister Raphael. She put her ungloved hand, that dainty, delicate hand — “ imagine these doing work like that ! ”

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she had mocked to Miss Cairns — upon the woman's forehead. The movement was spontaneous.

“Once I was like you,” said the woman. “Once I looked like you — like a flower, they said. And now —”

Her face began to work piteously. Sister Raphael glanced straight into Edith Selleck's eyes — and moved back. Her expression said plainly, “This is your work — do it.” Edith shrank from the task, even while something urged her on.

“They say you are quite ill,” she said gently.

“Oh, yes.”

“You are to undergo an operation to-morrow? Is there anything I can do for you?”

“You can talk to me — let me hear your voice. I'm not such a lost creature when a girl like you can talk to me.”

“Oh, do not say that!” cried Edith Selleck. “Do not! And indeed, I shall love to talk to you. Is there no one I can see? — have you people — tell me something I can —”

“There is no one to see. I broke my mother's heart. My people have forgotten me. Those who do know me now call me by the nickname they have given me. I am a woman with a soul as black as your hand is white.”

“No,” said Edith Selleck, “not if you are sorry.”

“Who cares?”

“God.”

“God has forgotten me, like the rest.”

“God has not.” Her eyes began to shine. Sister

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Raphael listening, watchful, knew that Edith Selleck was no longer self-conscious or abashed. "God has sent me here to ask you to come back to Him."

The woman caught her breath sobbingly. Edith leaned over her.

"I did not know I was coming—until this very moment I did not know why I came. Now I know. It was to see you. Let me help you—*do* let me help you. God is so good to those who are sorry from their hearts. And He has said He will forgive every one—He will forgive you. You don't want to die without being truly sorry?"

"No," said the woman, "without Him—I won't die without Him. Tell me—"

Edith Selleck put out her hand and caught at Sister Raphael's dress as if for help. It was indeed a mute plea for assistance, and Sister Raphael responded to it. The woman gazed up at her peaceful face with a new look in her eyes.

"My dear child," said the nun, "are you a Catholic?"

"I—was."

"Then you are one still at heart. I shall send a priest to you to-night. You will see him?"

"Yes, if you tell him, Sister, not to scold me—"

"Is it likely God would scold you if you are sorry and want to do better? The priest will not either."

"Send him then," she said; "send him quickly."

Another half hour completed the round. It was

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five o'clock when they reached the gate. Edith Selleck, the society belle, the queen of fashion, the proudest beauty of her circle, was no more. With the eyes of a child she placed her hand on Sister Raphael's arm.

"I thank you for letting me come," she said. "Shall I tell you the mystery of life?"

"Yes."

"It is pain."

"And its solution?"

"Patience. Pain and patience — pain and patience! Patience, the greatest passion in the world!" She lifted her young face. "I do not know what has happened to me — it is a change of heart in truth. One thing I would ask: Let me come again. Let me come next week with you?"

"If you care to."

"May I meet you here?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Sister Raphael. Mine is Edith Selleck."

"Selleck? Gregory Selleck's daughter?"

"You know my father?"

"Very well. He is a good man."

"I am glad you know him," said the girl, fervently. "We will not be strangers."

"We were never strangers," said Sister Raphael — "not from the moment your eyes questioned me."

"I am so happy," breathed Edith. "My feet scarcely

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seem to touch the ground. I was not happy until that woman spoke to me, and then I felt what you must feel, always. Glad — not for myself, I had forgotten myself, it is more like a gladness of spirit.” Her eyes were gleaming. “Everything seems of no consequence but just this gladness. The pain and suffering have not made me sad — on the contrary, for I see the reward of endurance.”

Sister Raphael smiled.

“To-morrow, my dear, your mood may have changed. Do not regret it if it has. If you cannot come next week, come when the impulse moves you. Oftentimes this lightness of spirit dies away, and leaves a sort of soul *ennui* — ”

Edith looked straight into her eyes.

“If this feeling that is in me dies away, I shall not come. And if it *can* die away, believe me, I shall regret nothing, for I will not have been worthy of it.”

CHAPTER XVI

HEROIC SUBTERFUGE

“IT was just this way,” said Mrs. Farrell. Her face was flushed, her eyes were misty, and she looked up at John Rollinson, transformed from the invalid she had grown to be to complete appearance of healthfulness for the time being. “I never was allowed to tell you, never. Mollie’s been that odd all her life, docther dear. It don’t seem natural that a young girl —”

“We cannot all be alike,” interrupted John Rollinson, absently. “Many people to make a world, Mrs. Farrell.”

“A thruer word you never spoke,” said Mrs. Farrell. “But listen to me now, docther, for I’m so full of it that it’ll kill me if I don’t tell some one how it happened. You mind the time that Danny got back afther servin’ his sentence? An’ how down on him every wan was but yourself? Well, what did that girl o’ mine do, d’ye think, but put it into his head to go away for a sojer. Sure, that’s what he is now, my boy Danny!”

She chuckled to herself, well-pleased.

“He went undher another name for fear it id be

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found out that he'd been in the reformatory. You see, we didn't know nothin' about the law, Mollie nor me, an' we thought maybe they wouldn't take him for a sojer if he let on what he'd done. An' we didn't want to ask nary a wan at all, or we'd 'a' asked you the first."

She looked at him anxiously. He understood the mild bit of flattery and nodded.

"So Mollie med it all right an' fixed it up — he was twenty-one, then — an' sure ain't he been four years away now, docther, sojerin' in the Philippines."

Her face was a study. All the glory and pride and joy of a mother in her first-born transfigured her.

"Jerry Phelan his name is, docther — me own dead father's name, Lord 'a' mercy on him. Arrah, don't I mind the day he bade me good-by! He put his two arms around me neck, an' he cried — for he was a soft-hearted lad, not like Mollie, who wouldn't shed a tear over me coffin, I'm thinkin' (not that she ain't a fine, good girl, docther, but so cold-hearted, it ain't natural she is). Me dear lad put both his arms around me an' asked me to bless him — as throe as you're sittin' there that was his word.

"'Bless me, mother,' he said, 'for God knows I need a blessin'. Pray for me too, that I may come back a hero — Mollie says I will — or die like wan.' That's what he says to me, docther dear."

The tears were flowing at the recollection. She rocked in the chair a moment. Even John Rollinson's

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eyes saw dimly — but not for the mother, or the boy who had gone away.

“That’s what he says to me — my blue-eyed laddie who was my on’y comfort in the bitter, dark days long gone, thank God. ‘Come back a hero,’ says he to me. Faith, docther, don’t you think he had the makin’ of a hero in him, don’t you, now?”

“Mollie thought so,” said John Rollinson, evasively. He had never considered Dan Farrell in the light of possible heroship.

“Well she might. Wasn’t she the lad’s own sither, an’ didn’t she value him? Didn’t she know his worth, didn’t she? Faith, when he turned to bid her good-by afther me, not a dhrop did she cry — not wan dhrop, an’ me that worried an’ put about that I couldn’t see for the tears that blinded me. No, sir. She kissed him that solemn-like — right on the forehead, an’ thin on the lips, an’ ’twas awesome so ’twas. An’ what was it she said, docther dear?”

John Rollinson was picturing that scene in imagination. He saw Mollie Farrell as he had seen her twice in his life, with her heart shining out of her somber eyes. He averted his face, that the mother might not, by any possible chance, read his expression.

“What d’ye think she said, Dr. Rollinson?” she repeated impatiently.

“Tell me,” said John Rollinson.

“‘Don’t be shot in the back, Dan,’ said she. ‘Face to the foe an’ fightin’ an’ God’ll do the rest!’ What

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d'ye think now of a girl that id say the like of that to a lad goin' out into a strange counthry filled wid savages an' wild bastes? What now?"

John Rollinson's hands clenched tightly. His face worked. So this was Mollie Farrell's motto! Well had she applied it in her daily life—and the great Creator *had* done the rest.

"What a girl!" he muttered, so low that she scarcely heard him. "What a girl! Where did you get her?" he cried, turning on the astonished Mrs. Farrell. "Where did she get that nature true as steel, that strong, true heart? With a spirit like hers the Christian martyrs suffered for their faith. Can't you see the strength under all her calmness, and the depth, and the wonderful— Oh, what a girl!"

Mrs. Farrell's mouth widened, her eyes opened, her hands fell inert upon her lap. She did not know what to make of this outburst on the part of her placid, self-contained physician. He sat back in his chair shamefaced, recalled to his senses when he saw the look of surprise on her countenance.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I could not help it. Will you continue, please, Mrs. Farrell? I am really anxious to hear the end of the story."

"He went away," continued Mrs. Farrell. She paused as if to recover the thread of the discourse which the young man had interrupted so rudely. "It's four years now, you know, an' never a sight of him have I had sence. But he writes as regular as clockwork.

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While Mrs. Baker, Lord 'a' mercy on her, was alive, the poor lad's pay kem every month to help take care of her. I felt kind of sore about that — it seemed so hard that the boy was workin' like a nigger an' havin' nothin' for himself — but afther Mollie showed me what he was a thryin' to do, I saw he was right. Maybe, now that he's done the very best he could, the good Lord won't hold it agin him that he took away Tom Baker's life. 'Twas on'y an accident — ”

Her eyes were fastened pleadingly on his face, and he could not, even if he would, resist their mute appeal.

“An accident, Mrs. Farrell. And Dan has made noble reparation. God does all for the best, remember. That unfortunate occurrence may have been the making of him.”

“Ah, sure, now, it's you has always the comfortin' word, God bless you. He's been writing home all this while — the lovin'est letthers, they are, too, they'd surprise you. An' Mollie reads me thim over an' over, the beautiful letthers he does be sendin', an' the ones she writes him back again! She can put the words together you'd scarce believe it was on'y Mollie, they're that heartenin'. Every word straight from the shoulder, as Dan says.”

“I believe it,” said John Rollinson. “Face to the foe and fighting, and God will do the rest.” He muttered the last words under his breath.

“Yestiddy another letther kem — 'twas in a strange handwritin'.” She hesitated, and then placed a shaking

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finger on his arm. "This is the secret now, docther, an' you must never breathe a word of it to a livin' soul, but I'm that happy I must tell it to some one. Yestiddy that letter kem an' stood there on that mantelpiece waitin' for Mollie to get home, for I haven't the readin' or writin' meself, docther. I knew 'twas from Dan, though it wasn't all scrawly like Dan's fist, an' I was so keen to hear what was in it that I couldn't bide till she had her things off, but med her open it right away. The first glance she gev at it she went so white that the heart lepped up into me mouth and I screamed that me boy was dead, that he'd gone out there to die like a dog. But Mollie laughed an' I was glad an' not scared any more; no harm id come to Dan that she could laugh at.

"Sure, mother dear, it's nothin' like that. Dan told you he'd come back a hero, an' he will, that's all."

"Off came her hat, an' she set down, an' thru as the Lord her lips were like chalk an' her hands shakin', she was so excited over the good news. But she read it to me, every word of it, an' what between laughin' an' cryin' over it meself, she had her own troubles wid me, God bless her. She does love Dan, Dr. Rollinson."

She fumbled through the great basket that lay on the broad window sill beside her, drawing from its depths a battered envelope.

"Every word she read, every word, an' sure I learned most of it by heart, it was so fine. How Dan an' the captain were caught in a trap by them little savages that do inhabit that place, an' the captain was shot in the

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side, an' down he went, wid never a soul about but our Danny — or Private Phelan, as he's known by out there — an' thim black divils tearin' mad around them. Finally, Dan saw his chance an' out he jumped an' away wid him, grabbin' up his captain an' runnin' like sixty! An' sure, dochter, didn't he get out of it widout e'er a scratch upon him! An' they expect he'll be promoted for that same, so they do."

"As indeed he ought to be," declared John Rollinson, warmly. "That was a noble thing. But how — did Dan write to you?"

"No, dochter. Dan wouldn't write a thing like that! He was so modest always, my own boy. Here's the letter — it's from a chum of his — an' you can read it for yourself."

She thrust the envelope into his hand and John Rollinson drew out the inclosure it contained, curious to know in what words were told the story of Dan Farrell's heroism. The mother settled herself back in the chair, her proud eyes fastened on his face. Gradually as he read, a perplexed line grew upon his forehead; then came complete astonishment. After which the curves of his mouth were gravely set ones, and no one could tell from his expression what his thoughts might be.

In a fine scholarly hand were inscribed the following words:—

"MY DEAR MISS FARRELL:—

"Except by name, I am a perfect stranger to you. But I know that Dan has mentioned Corporal Mason

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in several of his letters, and you have been kind enough to send remembrances to me from your mother and yourself—welcome words to a man who is alone in the world, and has no ties other than those his friends create for him.

“I regret that mine must be the pen to convey to you such news as I must give you now. But you will try to bear it? It is your right to know—your right to understand the present state of affairs.

“In the first place, your brother Dan, known to every one else here as Private Jerry Phelan, has been my friend, as I have been his, since he enlisted. I had not known him very long before he was good enough to trust me with his whole story. I have noticed with what eagerness he has tried to do his duty, though I am only a grade higher than himself.

“Was he born under an unlucky star? For a long time things went swimmingly, and it seemed as if Dan were on his way to promotion. About six months ago, however, the trouble commenced. Our captain went home on indefinite sick leave, and our acting captain took a great dislike to Private Phelan. His name is Blake, and by some unfortunate chance he had known him as Dan Farrell in New York City. Dan is quick-tempered—I cannot explain how things have been going, but they are looking black, very black at present.

“Do not think I am trying to alarm you needlessly. Everything—even the most trivial—seems to add fuel to the flames. Dan is full of enthusiastic patriotism.

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In another company he could reach his level, he could advance. He has become a fine soldier among soldiers, yet there are men here who are only too glad to urge him on to dissipation. Since you wrote him that the necessity of sending money home has been obviated by Mrs. Baker's death, it seems that having more to spend each month has brought him into a rougher set. My dear Miss Farrell, drink was his curse once, it may be his ruin.

“He is not altogether to blame, really. There are a half dozen of our fellows who ought to be drummed out of the army because of the example they give just such reckless chaps as Dan is now. What will be the outcome? Some day, with a little too much liquor in him, there will be angry words, a blow, maybe, or desertion. There will be no end then but disgrace, and a disgraced soldier is a burden to himself and to all the world.

“I should not write these words to you. I will not conceal the fact that I was tempted to write them anonymously, but such a course would be that of a coward, and I hope I am not a coward. I know this information will almost break your heart, but if you have any friends of influence, get them to have Dan exchanged — that is the only thing you can do for him. Misunderstanding and petty fault-finding are driving him to desperation. I like Dan. I respect him, because he has tried to atone for the past. But above all, I respect and honor that sister of his to whom I am addressing myself now, who has made a man of the

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lad and to whom I bow my head in reverence. God bless you, Miss Farrell, and God bless America, our own America, that has given birth to daughters such as you.

“I dare not read these words again, lest I regret penning them and destroy them—destroying, perhaps, Dan’s hope for the future. Forgive me, Miss Farrell, and God help you to help your brother.

“Sincerely,

“GILBERT MASON.”

John Rollinson read it through to the very last line, leaning back then with a long sigh, and shutting his eyes. He was stunned. For he read between the lines; he grasped the bickerings and the weakness that were driving Dan Farrell to his ruin; he felt the despair that was Dan Farrell’s portion. And Mollie—

Mrs. Farrell waited for him to speak. Her face was flushed, her lips trembling, her eyes moist. But when he remained in the same position, not uttering a word, she stirred impatiently, and touched his arm.

“Now! What d’ye think o’ that?” she asked.

He moved his arm away, unclosed his eyes, stared at the floor, and said nothing.

“Dr. Rollinson!” she began, this time in much perplexity.

“Think? Oh, yes—I was thinking,” he said vaguely. He roused himself and passed his hand across his forehead. “It is one of the finest stories I ever

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read," he said then, "and to know that it is true, all true!" A curious expression came into his eyes. "And Dan was able to do it, because you, his mother, were praying for him! That is the most wonderful part of all."

"Where does it say that? Show me. Sure Mollie never read that to me at all, at all, an' she was that confused, the poor child, she didn't read it the same way twice. I always had hopes for Mollie, she loved Dan so much. Just show me the line that's on, docther. Put your finger on it, so that I can mek believe I spelled it out meself, an' when Mollie —"

"No, no, no!" cried John Rollinson, hastily. "You must promise me one thing — give me your word that you will not breathe that I saw the letter —"

"Good lands, it isn't crazy I am! 'Twas her last words to me this morning — she kem back twice — to tell me not to show it. But you've been so fond of my Dan an' such a friend to him whin he was in throuble I think it id be downright cruelty not to let you hear the good as well as the bad. Otherwise I'd not dare go agin Mollie."

"That's right, Mrs. Farrell, and I'll tell you why. Maybe, if that were found out before Dan's promotion — and he's sure to be promoted now — it would work against him. They're sticklers about such matters at Washington, and one can't tell how things get around. It would be a pity to spoil Jerry Phelan's chances."

"Now, d'ye know, I never thought of that! It's the

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long head ye have, docther dear, and the good heart, too.”

“It was Mollie thought of it first, not I. Be sure you don’t let any one see it.” He rose as he spoke — but she looked up at him pleadingly.

“Show me that, docther,” she said in a trembling voice.

With an inward protest at this deception, the young man took her shaking hand in his, very gently and tenderly, and placed her forefinger on one of the lines at the bottom of the page. She peered at it, her lips quivering — then she carried the paper swiftly to her lips.

“My Dan — my own laddie! But ’tis your mother’s prayers’ll carry you to the Lord every day of your life, heart of my heart,” she murmured brokenly.

John Rollinson’s eyes grew dim. Before this blind mother-trust, this wonderful mother-love, all distinctions faded. The old face wore a holy light; the pale blue eyes partook of heaven’s own radiance. He felt how powerful with God must be the prayers of this one tried and suffering soul. And with this feeling of reverence for Mrs. Farrell’s boundless affection came a sadder thought. Was his own mother praying for her boy? Where in God’s name was she? And if death had not claimed her —

But he could not think of her sad, forsaken, poor, friendless, alone. To do so would render him almost desperate. “Wherever she went or whatever she did, her heart broke the night she left us!” Oh, bitter,

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bitter words! Oh, bitter, bitter thought! He moved restlessly.

“I must go out of town to-morrow,” he said, “to be away perhaps a week. I want to leave you some powders in case you have an attack of your heart trouble while I’m gone — this excitement may hurt you, you know. I shall prepare them myself. Tell Mollie to come to see me this evening, will you? If you notice any bad symptoms before I get back, send for Dr. Kortwright — I’ll give Mollie his address. Tell her she must not fail me; that I *must* see her. You understand?”

She nodded. He left her, turning at the door to see her clasping the letter to her heart, rocking to and fro, a little smile on her happy face. She had forgotten him. She was with Dan, her boy, her hero, her darling. Her lips moved. She was praying for Dan, her beloved. She was petitioning God’s favor for him, for her son who would always be the idol of her heart, her baby, her cherished one. A thrill shook John Rollinson from head to foot. His fingers trembled on the knob. He wanted to go to her then, to tear the veil from her eyes, to show her Mollie.

“Give her your love, give her your worship, mother-heart!” he cried mentally. “Oh, look at the soul of her, the bravery of her! Give her but half the love you give to Dan and soften her proud spirit with its unction. Give her the faith, the love, you give to one who is not worthy.”

Not worthy? He bowed his head, closed the door

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behind him, went softly down the stairs. Dare he judge? Was not judgment in God's hands? Not worthy! Dare his human littleness reach out to pass condemnation with those disparaging words?

"If he be not worthy, make him worthy, Lord!" he prayed, rising to the sublimity of the thought. "Make him worthy—for his mother's sake. And for hers, for Mollie's." His whole soul seemed to expand. In that instant he saw the meaning of it all, in that instant he knew himself. The moment of revelation had come. "For Mollie's sake, for the sake of the girl I love."

CHAPTER XVII

THE PREVIOUS EVENING

IT would be well, perhaps, to go back to the previous evening, and to the girl who faced so suddenly and so tragically what was, in actual fact, the most bitter moment she had ever known. Modest as was her nature, she had cherished, of recent years, a secret pride in her brother Dan, whom she had pictured striving bravely to do his duty, suffering his banishment from those he loved as an expiation. This revelation of Corporal Mason's was worse than the news of Tom Baker's death. At that time Mollie had but anticipated physical danger — the possible destruction of life. Her feelings, refined now by increase of age and knowledge, endured the more exquisite torture. The first impulse was to keep the frightful story from her mother's ears — which resulted in the heroic substitution of Dan's great deed. Then was agony upon agony piled. For the next hour she was forced to listen to that mother's enraptured tones, as they dwelt on Dan, his traits, his perfections, his heroism. The poor girl walked the room, her hands clasped behind her. The mother, fortunately, thought her restless because she could not

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control her delight at the achievement of the brother she loved, while Mollie knew that action was her only safeguard. She dared not sit still. The heart within her which she had deemed, but a few short months ago, so perfectly under her control, a machine to be guided by her will, protested once more against the iron hand that forced emotion down.

Fighting her desperate fear she went to the window and laid her cheek close against the cold glass. The heavens above were so blue, the stars so bright — and yet they seemed so far away! She turned her eyes to that vault of velvet.

“God help me,” she mutely prayed, “God help me.”

Her mother broke in with a delighted little laugh, calling to her.

“It’s wishin’ ye are that ye were away wid Dan now, isn’t it, acushla?” she said. “Wouldn’t it be the grand thing if we could but walk in on him wherever he is this very hour, and say not a word at all but just hug him tigh? He’s been gone such a long while, Mollie, an’ I’m gettin’ so old. Seems to me as if these arms o’ mine’ll never go round him in this life again.”

“Indeed they will, mother,” said Mollie; “we’ll have many happy days together yet, please God. He’ll have his leave next year he told us — next summer. Think of it!” And then she continued in a lower voice: “But I do wish we were with him now, mother, — oh, I do so wish we were with him now.”

She could not keep the pain and the longing from the

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tones that vibrated through the room. The passionate love for that brother which had seemed to be growing lukewarm, sprang up anew now that she had cause to fear for him — for his honor and his life. Of what use had it been to send him forth, face to the foe and fighting with God to do the rest? Of what use? The nails sank into her palms. “Don’t be shot in the back, Dan,” she had said — and now worse was to befall.

“Won’t you go to bed, mother?” she asked, and her voice was gentle. “I’m afraid this excitement will hurt you.”

“Hurt me? Hurt me, is it? Why, child, I could sit up forever, I’m that happy! ’Tain’t such news as kem this day id hurt me. I’m well, dear, I tell you, I’m well. I’ll never be sick again, nor heartsore for my little lad, Mollie, never, never.”

To prove it she burst into tears, sobbing bitterly, so that Mollie had to soothe her with comforting words and tender touches and praise of Dan. And then, after much persuasion and coaxing, she agreed to go to bed, and took the medicine the girl prepared for her. In a very short while she was wrapped in peaceful slumber.

Her daughter walked softly into the parlor, and shut the door behind her.

So many things had happened to her in this room! Here she had listened to the story of Tom Baker’s murder; in this room the officers of the law had torn her brother from her clinging hands; in this room she had faced John Rollinson and made him comprehend the

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depths of her untrained nature ; from this room she had sent her brother forth to redeem himself ; in this room John Rollinson had found the heart of the child guarded by the knowledge of the woman — it had witnessed Mollie Farrell's evolution, this room — it bore, in every line of its simple furnishings, a trace of Mollie Farrell's soul. To it she came now, mute room, plain room, beloved room. With a sob of relief that seemed to rend her heart in two she knew that she was alone in it, with it. As if all power left her limbs, she dropped to the floor and crouched there. Only for an instant — the next she was on her feet again. The weight of her hair annoyed her, and she tore the pins from it roughly. Her nature was so primitive that only rough action could express the torrent of emotion that swept over her. She looked like some poor, mad, hunted thing, with that light in her eyes, and those strong teeth sunk savagely into her underlip, drawing the blood. Dan, Dan, Dan! Dan an outcast! Dan a traitor! Dan her brother . . . her brother . . . her brother. . . . And for this she had sent him away with the injunction, " Face to the foe and fighting and God will do the rest ! "

" God will do the rest ! "

Surely God would — why not trust Him ? Her two arms went above her head until the hands met, clasped, clung together. Once more she slid down, but to her knees this time, her thin hands clinging to the panel of the door — against which her shaking form was leaning, her face raised.

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“That is it!” she whispered, and the words hurt her aching throat. “God will do the rest! . . . O God, my God, surely I have asked little in my lonely life? You were with me, my dear Lord, and I resigned myself to lack of love and tenderness. Be good to me! Strip me of everything—afflict me—torture me; lay bare my very soul to the gibes of men, give me pain, great pain, anguish of spirit, but pity me. What You send I shall endure, and kiss the chastening rod. But save Dan! Only You can do this—only You. Help me, my God, help me.”

As if in answer to that sobbing prayer, a great peace fell upon her. She did not know whence it came or how. The loving ear of God, ever at His creatures’ lips to catch the word of pleading, heard this appeal. She lowered her arms and sat silent, with half-closed eyes and face out of which all pain had faded.

In infancy we learn to prattle our mother tongue. Our schoolbooks teach us words and phrases that mean little to our awakening perceptions. We pray in the very presence of God Himself, the sentences flowing easily and glibly from our lips. We express in face and bearing every emotion that we are given the talent to portray and follow up this portrayal with words, words, words.

And yet until its meaning has been brought home to us by the pain or longing of our hearts, our language is as a sealed book. We know it and we do not know it. Only the agony of such moments as Mollie Farrell w. s.

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experiencing now can teach us the full, the awful
wonderful, the powerful significance of just that
Phrase:—
“O God! Help me!”

* * * * *

It was dark — dark as pitch — and the air was heavy with the languorous odor of many flowers. The intergreen of grass and trees was a blur, the vivid colors of day all one in the somber night. Not a sound was heard save the sentries' calls as they paced their rounds. They were unusual carefulness and vigilance, for word had come that an uprising had been planned, and that the insurgents would seek to attack the city at midnight. Out in the darkness, intrenchments and groves were filled with fighting men, houses were fortified, bands of sharpshooters crouched in the dense, high grass, and under the scarlet bushes where sunbird and dove preened shining plumage in the glowing noon, were men, waiting, with slanting rifle barrels. Waiting: that was all.

From the ballroom of the hotel came slow strains of music, to which men and women were dancing. There was a fascination in the scene, evidently, to one poor lad in khaki, who crawled up close to the veranda, wide and low, that ran around the entire building. He watched with intent eyes the gay faces inside the brilliantly lighted room — the wives and sweethearts and sisters of the American soldiers mixing with the beautiful mestizo natives, the few civilians and courteous officers — the last

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present more as a blind than anything else, for the day had been one of alarms, and not a man of them but was anxious to be out with the rest. The punkahs were going rapidly, the servants moving hither and thither with cooling drinks. Low laughter came drifting out into the quiet night, and once a splendid barytone took up a line of the song the band was playing for a waltz.

The young soldier in khaki crouched lower and lower. How fair and how beautiful his country-women looked — he had a sister who was one with them in feeling and in patriotism. He dared not think of that sister now — he put her away from him, for he was taking his last glance at civilization. Jerry Phelan was on the verge. Worse things than desertion tempted him.

“To-morrow the bolomen and the nipa shacks,” he said between his set teeth. Then, with a bitter laugh, “I’ll improve my knowledge of the Tagalog tongue.”

A man stopped at the window near him — a handsome, imperious-looking fellow. His pleasant laugh reached the ears of the lad outside. A bitter imprecation fell from his lips. Earlier in the day he had heard that pleasant laugh — it had been an insult to him before all the men of his company. The feelings it had aroused then sprang up with renewed force.

“Curse you!” he said, “it’s all your fault. Only for you I’d be a good man and a good soldier; only for you I might have gained respect. Curse you — may my life and my death curse you!”

He turned and went away from the sight of the one

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he hated and who hated him. He knew where the Filipinos waited. To-night he trod the earth with claim to a shred of honor. To-morrow he would be deserter, traitor, renegade.

“How can I help this?” he said. “What other way is open? One man’s blood against me—one man’s life hounding me. My hands are red, and nothing can ever cleanse them. Before long there would be two —”

He paused. His eyes began to shine. “*Why not?*” he whispered. “Why not? As well the game as the name. He would be a lucky loss to the boys, to the regiment, while I—I should get square! Why not?”

He stood irresolute, glaring down the path that led away from truth and honor and all good,—the path he meant to tread that night. Ten minutes’ brisk walking would decide his future. There it lay—a straight path and no questions asked—nothing to stop him but the hatred in his heart. And as the devil put this thought into his rioting brain, all the undisciplined passion of other days rose in a mad rush of fury, as the devil showed him how easily he could accomplish it. He thrust his cap away from his eyes and laughed—yes, laughed in a way to chill the blood. He was fascinated by this daring evil, which required but a little patience, a little quiet maneuvering. He knew the spot his captain would pass that night. A stab in the back, quick, true—and all would be over. The crime might never be traced to him, for who more silent or more treacherous than the

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dusky little men out yonder behind their intrenchments?

He threw back his shoulders resolutely, and his face was brutal. He had made up his mind. Down the path he swung with steady step. And then he paused.

Why?

Before him, on the ground, shone a little circle of light, no larger than an orange.

It attracted his attention, it arrested his feet. He bent forward, wondering, his eyes straining. But he saw nothing save that small circle of light, no larger than an orange. He stepped lightly, curious to see this phenomenon. He took one stride forward—a second, a third—no more.

And the circle of light grew until it seemed to fill the dark path with radiance—a living flame, through which he could not have penetrated if he would. He shut his eyes, thinking it but the vision of a disturbed brain. He opened them again, to gaze, awestruck. Within that circle there was something that seemed familiar, and he bent forward. Slowly out of the heart of it there grew a face, a thin face, with a mass of dark hair falling about it, with dark eyes fastened upon him, with lips moving piteously. He heard nothing. But he who heeded no friend, dreaded no foe, mocked at conscience, stood frightened at this fantasy of his own disordered thoughts.

“Mollie!” he said thickly; “what are you doing here?”

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He strained his ears — surely those lips would speak to him !

“ Mollie,” he said again, and his voice shook, “ my dear sister ! ”

Those eyes were fastened on him — those pleading, loving eyes !

“ Mollie,” he whispered, sobbing. “ I won’t — I swear I will not, Mollie.”

The vision grew dim and faint — it faded altogether. By and by some one came along the path, stumbling against him. It was Corporal Mason, who, fearing the very worst because of Jerry Phelan’s long absence, had come out, at the first opportunity, to search for him. He put his arm affectionately about the younger man’s shoulders.

“ This is no place for you, old chap,” he said ; “ you’ll get the fever sure — or have a black monkey run up behind you in the dark and stick a knife in you. Come on — let’s get back — we’ll have a game — ”

But Jerry Phelan reeled against him.

“ Face to the foe and fighting and God will do the rest,” he muttered hoarsely. “ That’s what she said. Well, let God do it, then — let Him do it. Take me away, Mason, take me away. I’ve seen Mollie.”

And Private Phelan tumbled, like one stricken, into his comrade’s arms.

CHAPTER XVIII

MAC SELLECK GIVES ADVICE

“ I SAY, John.”

“ Yes ? ”

“ You’ve heard that story of the fellow who declared he’d be awfully lonesome if he hadn’t himself to keep himself company ? ”

John Rollinson looked at his friend with interest.

“ That’s on me, I suppose, because I’m not talking to you.”

“ Not talking to me — *not talking to me!* You’ve just subsided.”

“ Well, then, what do you want ? ”

“ Permit me to get a word in between the thinks.”

“ Go ahead — what can *you* have to say of any importance ? ”

“ I’m sure I don’t know what to say to a man in love.”

“ At last ? ” exclaimed John Rollinson. “ You’re in love at last, Mac ? ”

Mac groaned.

“ Wipe off your spectacles,” he said, “ and look at me. In love ? I ? Can I ever fall in love ? Alas, alas, marriages are *not* made in heaven.”

Mac Selleck gives Advice

This time John Rollinson looked disgusted.

“Cheek!” he said. “But I might expect it.”

“Laugh at me—laugh at me,” complained Mac, “I’m serious.”

“You promised me you’d become a Catholic if ever you turned serious,” reflected John Rollinson.

“Serious or sick, I said.”

“Well, serious or sick then.”

Mac chuckled.

“Souled and healed while you wait by Father Laurence and John Rollinson. Perfect satisfaction guaranteed.”

“May I remark that your joking spirit occasions me many misgivings?”

“Yes, you may—but it won’t help you any—for I’m serious, I tell you.”

“In spite of myself I believe you are,” said John Rollinson, looking at him keenly. He knew that even with the light word upon his lips there were times when grave thoughtfulness looked out of Mac Selleck’s eyes. This gravity was in them now, and it caught John Rollinson’s attention.

“I believe you are,” he repeated. “Forgive me, Mac, for not noticing it before. What’s the trouble?”

He sat down. He had been walking the floor talking to Selleck between intervals of utter silence; not talking to him, but at him, rather, planning a course of action for himself, showing how he could befriend Dan Farrell and how imperative were the reasons that he should

Mac Selleck gives Advice

befriend him. It was five o'clock in the afternoon of the day on which he had seen Dan's mother. Already he had cabled a guarded message to Captain Blake at Luzon, and the letter was written and dispatched that would set the machinery at Washington in motion to secure the exchange of the unfortunate lad — for John Rollinson had friends in high places and asked few favors. His first act after leaving Mrs. Farrell was to look up Dan's regiment; he discovered, then, that the captain of Company F was a man he had known very well for several years, who would not hesitate to grant him anything in his power. And in order fully to accomplish his desires he intended setting out for Washington the following morning. So that his earnestness was not feigned, as could be seen.

Now he sat staring at the floor, frowning a little, with Selleck's eyes fixed upon him curiously. The sentence with which he broke in on John Rollinson's reverie was more an assertion than an inquiry.

"Don't you think, John," he asked slowly, "that history repeats itself?"

"What do you mean?"

Mac shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't you guess?"

"About Dan Farrell, I suppose. You would let matters take their course — imagine me foolish to interfere, and all that?"

Mac, lying back so carelessly in his friend's most comfortable chair, looked the incarnation of laziness.

Mac Selleck gives Advice

"Perhaps I mean that — perhaps I don't. *Is* it possible you do not comprehend me?"

Rollinson prepared for an argument immediately.

"No riddles," he said; "what do you mean?"

"I have discovered two things — your secret and my own idiocy. I have been with you day after day, watched you, know you as well as I do my brother Gregory — better. And yet you had to take an evident fact and deliberately shove it down my throat, slap me in the face with it, as it were, before I so much as suspected it."

"Mac —"

"Tut, tut, old man, I tell you I *know*. For whose benefit are you doing this? Mrs. Farrell's? A good enough old soul, I grant you, according to what you tell me, but blind as a bat where that daughter of hers is concerned. Own up. Are you doing this for Mrs. Farrell?"

"No," said John Rollinson.

"Admission No. 1. I thought you weren't. Now comes Dan Farrell. What do you care about Dan Farrell? Nothing desirable is he? He's a rough — well!" as John Rollinson put up his hand with a hasty exclamation. "He would have been only for his sister. Again the girl in the case. You know the French of it — *cherchez la femme*. And that same Dan Farrell struck down a man in his drunken anger, committing what the world calls crime, what the law calls murder. Confess again. What do you care for Dan Farrell?"

Mac Selleck gives Advice

“Nothing,” said John Rollinson.

“Admission No. 2. For Mrs. Farrell the philanthropic young physician may have sympathy. For the unfortunate Daniel, pity. But for Miss Farrell —”

John Rollinson said no word, though his eyes were sparkling.

“For Miss Farrell,” continued Mac Selleck, with an imperturbability which showed that in his way he was taking keen enjoyment in this dissection of his friend, “he has neither sympathy nor pity. It is something else. Something higher and nobler, he would tell you. Something that enters a man’s life just once in all the years he lives. Something that makes the heaviest burdens trifles light as air. Haven’t I heard this lover cant before?” He had spoken almost mockingly — now he leaned over with sudden earnestness: “John, trust me; John, old man, am I right?”

There was nothing but the sincerity of an honest comrade in the glance he brought to bear on the handsome face so close to his; nothing but the truest friendship in the clasp of the hand he extended. Rollinson met that clasp halfway, and answered his gaze with one as truthful and sincere.

“Yes, you are right,” he said simply. “How did you guess it?”

“Any one would *know* it who has been listening to you the last hour. Are you aware that you have walked up and down this floor since I came, talking of the Farrell family?”

Mac Selleck gives Advice

“ Well, Mac, I — ”

“ Especially Miss Farrell. What she is, what she isn't. Her character, her self-sacrifice, her strength — ”

“ I give in,” said John Rollinson, with flushing face ;
“ I give in. That's what I've been doing.”

“ You're no different to the others,” said Mac Selleck.
“ And now what does the young lady think of you ? ”

“ I don't know,” said John Rollinson. “ I don't imagine she ever thinks of me. But she *shall* ! Mac, she shall like me — I'll force her to like me.” He sprang to his feet. “ Don't bring up the possibility. There was something in her face that night — the night I saw her at Mrs. Baker's — Why did I not tell her then, then, when she was in such a softened mood — she would have listened — ”

“ Ye gods of ancient Rome ! Ye little fishes of Rhode Island ! ” groaned Mac, with touching pathos. “ That I should sit here — I, Mac Selleck, and listen to the moonstruck ravings of stony-hearted John Rollinson. John Rollinson ! Over a poor, insignificant, black-eyed daughter of poverty ! ”

“ Give it to me straight ! ” said John Rollinson, smiling. “ I'll have to stand it — and much more than that to win my poor, insignificant, black-eyed daughter of poverty. What in the world will she say to me ? ” He threw back his head with an exultant laugh. “ How those black eyes will flare — and how she will set her little mouth ! I have never seen a face that could express such defiance — ”

Mac Selleck gives Advice

“Defiance? That was before she knew such good fortune was in store for her. Oh, it’s all very well to pretend to me and to yourself, and to the whole world, if you like, that she won’t consider the material benefits attached — ”

The light died out of John Rollinson’s eyes. He put up his hand with a commanding gesture.

“Stop,” he said quietly; “don’t talk so — you are a stranger to the girl.”

“But look at the husband you will make! Handsome and healthy, strong and young, of a fine family, good connections, enough money to allow her to do just as she pleases — more pin money in a month than she’d ever see in her whole life.” Selleck smiled scornfully. “And you think she’d turn you down? Well, I say — *not!*”

He swung one knee over the other, bringing his hand heavily on the arm of his chair, looking straight into John Rollinson’s disturbed face.

“Forgive me — I am speaking for your good. Man alive, the elements don’t mix. You’ll be disappointed, unhappy. You’ll be miserable. I can’t understand how a sensible fellow like you can consider such a marriage. Supposing she is noble and self-sacrificing. Supposing she is loving and non-mercenary — what will such an alliance mean? Think it over.”

Very quietly John Rollinson sat back in his chair and turned impassive countenance toward his friend.

“Go on,” he said, “you haven’t finished yet, Mac.”

Mac Selleck gives Advice

"You know what I mean," said Mac, gravely. "You know what a set ours is. We have our own tastes, our own ideas. The women she would meet as your wife are not of her kind — contrast her with any one of them — with Edith, with Miss Cairns — and they could make her mighty miserable. They would, too. Mark my words, they'd embitter her whole existence. And her people, John! Forcing the sister of a vulgar murderer on your class, the refined class in which you move! Imagine your children having a murderer for an uncle — Uncle Dan, the murderer!"

John Rollinson's lips twisted oddly. He moistened them with his tongue.

"Perhaps you have read," he began in a well-controlled voice — "you quote enough to lead me to suppose you a reader — of that man who told his sweetheart that he was poor, of humble birth, and that one of his relatives was hanged? To which she replied that she, too, was poor, of humble birth — and while none of her relatives had been hanged, several among them deserved to be."

And this he said to conquer the rising anger in his heart.

"For God's sake, John," said Mac Selleck, "I am in no mood to jest."

"In no mood to jest?" repeated John Rollinson, in that cold, low voice. "I am? Go on — if you have any more to say."

Mac, the self-contained, had lost his head. His face was flushed.

Mac Selleck gives Advice

“Her brother a murderer, uneducated, unrefined,” hotly; “her mother unlettered, uncouth, vulgar, low-born; the girl —”

“Mac!” said John Rollinson, and the veins stood out like cords in his forehead, “wait now. I — I can’t quarrel with you, old chap, I can’t, although you’ve cut me to the heart. I am afraid. But why? Because of our set? No, indeed — but of what the sneers of others — of men like you, gentle, honest men like you, Mac, my dear, dear friend, might mean to her sensitive soul. Granted, for argument’s sake, that she is not the equal of ‘our set,’ as you call it, though God knows it has never been my set. Granted that her people are vulgar; that her brother is a murderer; that her days belong to a man who pays her so much an hour for the labor of her head and hands. Granted, granted all that! But I tell you that even the murderer you scorn has a whiter soul, maybe, than many who sit this day in high places. Remember that the beggar who crouched at Dives’ gate rested rich in supreme reward! Put yourself in my place, Mac — by heaven, you shall, if words can get you there. Put the unfortunate fellow Dan out of the question — what is he to me? Think of a little passion flower, poorly nourished, reaching blindly for the sun, hungering for its warmth and its light, battling in its own piteous way through dark clouds of misunderstanding, and the white soul shining underneath, pure as an angel’s. Ah, ‘what do I care if your star is a world — mine has opened its heart to me, therefore, I love it.’”

Mac Selleck gives Advice

He did not take his intent gaze from Mac Selleck's face.

"And you? You saw these struggles, and some blindness kept you from recognizing them. You extended a helping hand, a thoughtless hand. Then suddenly your eyes were opened — opened wide. And just as you had grasped the meaning of it, *I* came to *you* and told you to beware of human respect. *Human respect!* God, what crimes are committed in that empty name! Thank heaven, we Catholics are taught to despise it in the sense in which you apply it now. And because this flower was not clad in the purple and fine linen of 'our set' I bade you cast it aside — and your happiness with it! What would you say to *me?*"

In that speech Mac Selleck learned the depth of John Rollinson's regard for him. The flashing eyes, the distended nostrils, the quivering breath, showed what restraint he put upon himself in order to answer this friend reasonably, and with courteous words.

"And this — is love?" asked Mac, involuntarily.

"Love?" John Rollinson shook his head. "Not what 'our set' would call love. We know the term and what the term implies; we have found no other name to give it — or perhaps the name we ought to give it would be too strong for the refined ears of 'our set.' The love that is true so far transcends ourselves as to lift us to the height of heaven. I would rather love this girl without a single word of kindness from her lips, than be the recipient of all the tenderness another woman could bestow on me."

Mac Selleck gives Advice

Never, in all his life, had Mac seen him so stirred. He had told John Rollinson often that he knew him better than he knew himself; he realized now that under this placid exterior were depths of feeling he could never fathom. But not even this realization caused him to hesitate. He had something more to say, something cruel, and he would say it. From man to man he would say it, and let the consequences rest between them.

“There is another reason and one over which I shall not have to waste words,” he said doggedly. “Have you forgotten that history repeats itself?”

“Ah!” said John Rollinson, and the light went out of his face.

“You had forgotten? You think this love will never die? Supposing it does? Supposing you teach her to love you as — as your father was loved. And then you grow — tired. Have you any assurance to the contrary? And what will her life be then? What your mother’s was.”

“Mac!” he exclaimed.

Mac stirred restlessly and turned his face away. The note in his friend’s voice hurt him. So silence fell — a silence that lasted a long, long while. John Rollinson sighed.

“Oh!” he said, then, in a shaken tone, “I am indeed afraid. I had forgotten the mission my father bequeathed me. I have been living this day in a foolish dream of paradise. Is it not odd that my father’s fortune

Mac Selleck gives Advice

should be mine?" He drew himself erect. "These are my people, Mac — my mother was of them. Perhaps that accounts for the plebeian strain you deplore."

He smiled, and Mac understood the effort it cost him to appear light hearted.

"You have placed a curious problem before me," he went on; "I shall be wise and circumspect — I shall be cool and calm. I am not like my father. I have not been brought up to indulge in every freak of fancy. My life has consisted of something more than the gratifying of every whim. And of one thing rest assured — a thing of which I am as positive as that there is a heaven above me. My love for her is second only to my love for God; if I do not marry Mollie Farrell, I shall marry no other woman."

CHAPTER XIX

THE CIRCUMSPECTNESS OF JOHN ROLLINSON

AND what of Mollie Farrell? To the sudden peace that calmed her spirit that night — the God-sent peace that saved her reason — had succeeded a dull aching of heart and head. What was she to do? Dan's fate rested in her helpless hands — Dan's fate! To whom could she turn? To whom could she tell that story with hope of assistance?

Her love for Dan was an idealized affection — an affection altogether separate from the worthiness or unworthiness of its object. She was not the untaught girl who had given Dan the absolute fidelity of her childhood. She looked at life with sadder eyes — and therefore more comprehensive ones. Dan stood out boldly from a dreamy past; his love seemed to have been a great blessing for which she had never been sufficiently grateful.

Poor Mollie! There was disillusionment still in store for her. She measured her brother's nature by her own; her soul was broadening year by year, and year by year she set Dan's standard higher, wilfully deceiving herself — as so many of us do in regard to those we love. Had she seen him daily she could not have given him this

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blind affection. But he was far away and the love remained and she spent the wealth of her heart upon it. He had always loved her, been guided by her. She told herself that if she could reach him, he would still love, would still be guided in the old-time way.

She turned over and over in her mind every possible source of help. She had no friends of influence. There was Mr. Selleck. But Mr. Selleck might tell his daughter. She shuddered, with an aversion that was almost sickness, from being still farther an object of idle comment or of curiosity to the proud and scornful Edith. Supposing that she risked all this, made the supreme sacrifice of telling him — and that then he could do nothing!

There was Harold Seymour. Several times that day she found herself looking at the kind face of the man whom she knew entertained more than a passing friendship for her. He would strain every nerve to do anything she asked. But how bring herself to uncover that sad past, reveal Dan's wretched story to — a stranger? He could never be anything but a stranger, unless, out of gratitude, she — But no. It would not be just to him to take all and give nothing . . . she did not love Harold Seymour.

There was John Rollinson. Her face crimsoned. How much she owed him! How deeply she was in his debt! For Dan's sake, first and foremost — and then for the high ambitions he had been the means of rousing in her childish heart. There was still another reason —

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but trust Mollie Farrell not to put into words the feeling she dared not entertain. She had fought that out long months ago — fought it, cast it behind her. Yet it was because of this very reason, this unconfessed reason, that she thrust aside the idea of his help almost as soon as it had formed in her mind.

So the day, the long and bitter day, passed into its gray and bitter twilight.

“To-morrow,” she told herself, as she walked homeward, her form drooping, her head bent, and the shadows under her deep eyes making her appear ill and worn, “to-morrow surely it will not hurt me so. And then I shall be able to tell Mrs. Warden, and she will advise me what to do. She will go to Mr. Selleck for me — she is so kind, so generous. It must be Mr. Selleck — I *know* it must be Mr. Selleck! After all,” and her breath caught in a little sob; “what does it matter about me if — if — I can help? It is for Dan.”

Her mother, happy, gay as a child, gave her John Rollinson’s message. It was the first time he had ever left a message of that sort, and a cold chill of fear went through her body. Going away! He was going away! And if Mr. Selleck could do nothing! John Rollinson out of reach, and Dan, her brother Dan, left to his ruin. Oh, but Mr. Selleck surely could do something! Mr. Selleck could! She must not tell John Rollinson — she dared not tell John Rollinson this — she dared ask him nothing more.

Her brain whirled — she knew she had reached the

The Circumspectness of John Rollinson

limit of endurance then, for she was fighting herself; she knew it when that one resolve came back with overpowering force as she turned her face toward John Rollinson's dwelling. No matter what happened she could not speak of this to him — and yet, and yet, supposing there were no one else? She began to tremble with nervousness at the thought of seeing him at all. Perhaps he would not be at home! Perhaps he would leave the powders — what more likely? This hope strengthened her trembling limbs. She waited a few moments in the vestibule of the house, straightening her thin figure bravely. She rubbed her lips — fearing that the lines about them would never be smoothed away, and she tried to smile in the darkness, that her face might appear pleasant and unconcerned. She pressed the electric button, and almost instantly John Rollinson's own gray-haired servant swung the door wide and she entered in.

“If you are Miss Farrell,” he said with quiet deference, “you are not to be kept waiting. Will you please come this way?”

The worst had befallen. Her hopes were vain! The man led her along the hall to the consulting room.

“Miss Farrell, sir,” he announced.

John Rollinson sat at the table in the center of the apartment. His face was in the shadow. Books and papers were spread out before him in a confusion very little in keeping with his methodical habits, and, indeed, if Mollie had but known it, he was as excited in

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his way as she. But Mollie did not know it. She stood just inside the door, which the servant closed softly behind her. She stood there very patiently, waiting for him to speak, tell her what he cared to, give her what instructions he might, and then dismiss her. Her form was erect enough, and her face was brave enough, but its ashen pallor was not good to see, and there was a gleam of red in her dusky eyes. She had little idea of the picture she presented — and no idea of the convulsive leap John Rollinson's heart gave when he looked up at her — silent and sorrowful.

“Won't you sit down?” he said, and his gentle voice barely stirred the quiet of the room. “You may have to remain — I would like to talk to you. But first I must apologize for bringing you over here. I could not say what I had to in your mother's presence. Are you tired?”

“Yes,” she said.

The word was a whisper. He sprang up, and pulled a chair forward — the very chair in which Mac Selleck had been sitting three hours previous. She took it without demur, and her head fell back wearily.

“I am very tired,” she said listlessly, wondering at her own calmness. “I cannot excuse myself for being so. It was only my strength of will that brought me here to-night.”

“I understand. Will you,” he said hesitatingly, “will you have a glass of water?”

He was embarrassed. The sight of her shook his

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self-control. He feared he could not stand it long if she looked at him like that.

“No,” she said; “it would choke me. There is something here —” she touched her throat — “that will not let anything pass it. But I thank you.”

He sat down.

“Won’t you take your hat off, at least — you will feel better. That is good,” as she obeyed him mechanically. “I suppose your mother has told you I am going away to-morrow? I thought so,” as she bent her head in acquiescence. “Dr. Kortwright will take care of my people while I am gone. I doubt if she will need any attendance, however, and you know how to give her these powders. She looked well this morning — better than I have seen her in a long time.”

She smiled faintly.

“I am going to Washington,” he said, then, a little abruptly. “I have heard that a young man whom I knew at one time, a certain Jerry Phelan (queer name, isn’t it, Jerry Phelan?), a soldier in our new colonies, has got himself into a bit of a mess. As I am acquainted with Captain Blake, at present his superior officer, and as I have been lucky enough to win his gratitude in the past, I shall probably be able to get Private Phelan out of trouble, and also have him transferred. But you see I *must* go to Washington for that purpose.”

Silence.

He had spoken clearly and distinctly and slowly, so that she would not lose a single syllable. Nor did he

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look at her, but toyed with a paper-cutter lying before him on the table. Those eyes were upon him, and he knew it, and longed with all his heart to meet them — but he dared not. He was to be calm and cool and circumspect — and he could be none of those if he met the glance he felt she gave him now. A convulsive grasping at the arms of the chair — a shrinking as from a blow — a flaring open of lids — a parting of lips — a catching of the breath — and then she flung herself forward on her knees in front of him, seizing one hand in both of hers.

“Am I dreaming? This is true, real? Dr. Rollinson, answer me — are you here, or is it fancy, or am I mad? Dr. Rollinson, Dr. Rollinson, tell me truly what you have said — what you have said to me, to me.”

“Mollie, my dear child!” The protecting tenderness that is the holiest portion of a man’s honest love flooded his every vein. “My poor little girl, do not give way like this. It is true, it is real, no fancy, no dream.”

She could not take her eyes from him.

“If it is true, repeat it,” she persisted. “What was it? Do not torment me — I can’t stand much more; see, I — oh, you know I cannot stand any more, Dr. Rollinson.”

“I am going to have Dan transferred — have already sent a message to Captain Blake, under whom he is stationed, that will make him more lenient until the transfer comes. Dan is all right, Mollie — Dan is safe.”

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He could not keep the thrill from his voice, but she took no heed. The wild light died out of her face, and she bent it until it rested on the hand she held, and he felt something warm and wet gush over his fingers. He knew she was crying; knew it, too, by the quivers that shook her from head to foot. Cool, calm, circumspect — those were the words he had used, this grave young man. He had forgotten, perhaps, that he was mortal, for all his resolutions — and that this was the girl he loved. He did not question circumstances or station or connections then or ever. He loved her — that was sufficient. Loved her as his father had loved his mother — not in the first fancy for her beautiful face, but afterward, when his affection had become part of himself. All his hopes for future happiness were bound up in one plain little girl who knelt like a broken flower crushed by a tempest, at his feet. Gently he drew his hand from her clasp and lifted her as if she were a child, and put her head upon his shoulder, encircling her with one tender arm, smoothing back the dark hair from a forehead he could not see, his touch as soft as that of a woman.

“My love for her is as my love for God,” he had told Mac Selleck. In all their purity and beauty he realized how true his words had been. Love! at that name men should remove their head covering: should stand with reverent mien, as on the threshold of a holy place. Love! Than which there is nothing purer in the universe! It is our pitiable way of taking it that demeans it, that lowers it, and ourselves. For when we desecrate it with

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unworthy thoughts and unworthy actions and unworthy words, the love that is love leaves us, escapes from us, and we retain but its poor shadow, thinking we have the reality. Over the shadow, then, we gloat in our weak way, not understanding that the substance has escaped us—until, as is the custom with unreal things, the conviction strikes home to us that there is something missing. When that hour comes, we cry out, and mourn or mock. We are not satisfied—God has not made us to be satisfied with shadows, and, in our crass ignorance, we will not understand that we have lost love because of our irreverence. Often, indeed, we tolerate the shadow forever after. We are disappointed, we tell the world, if the world permits it, or our neighbor, who cannot avoid us. There is no such thing as love—the love we believed in, the love we were told of, the love that inspires great deeds, heroic thoughts—there is no such thing! Fools that we are, not to realize that we have lost heaven's best gift because of earthliness!

Well, then, might John Rollinson, the reverent, say that his love for Mollie Farrell was as his love for God. He knew it with his arm about her, her head upon his shoulder. He knew it with the slender form clasped close to him, shaken with bitter sobs. Poor Mollie felt, in a benumbed fashion, that this was part of a dream, also. Mrs. Warden had clasped her so, had kissed her—but Mrs. Warden was undemonstrative as Mollie herself, and it is the affliction of undemonstrative natures seldom to be able to show their real depths of feeling.

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It had to end. Mollie herself ended it. Gradually the sobs ceased and the tears, and she dried her eyes and would have withdrawn herself from his clasp. But he would not permit it.

“To cry—like this!” she said in an undertone. “Forgive me—but I could not help myself. I do not know what has happened—”

She was crimson. Never again could she school herself in John Rollinson’s presence; never again could she look at him proudly, and defy him to read her thoughts. She made another effort to release herself and this time he lifted her to the chair. She was so exhausted that she could not have prevented this arbitrary act if she would. They looked at each other—then he bent before her, holding her two hands. Upon her face was a doubt and a question. He answered both with a happy smile.

“Little Mollie,” he said, “I am on my knees to you—as I hope to remain on my knees before your sweet soul in all the years to come. Mollie, you don’t realize what love is—yet. This morning I read that letter—your mother showed it to me, and I understood. Child, I have been loving you for years. I have loved you since I first saw your worried little face. I did not know it—forgive me that I was blind—”

She twisted her fingers nervously, but he still held them.

“I shall ask nothing—I have already asked too much. But your interests are mine. I dared not go to you to-night with this story, fearing the effect it

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would have upon your mother if she overheard. So I bade you come to me. You must pardon me for that, dear —”

“But there is nothing to pardon,” she said; “I have nothing to pardon you. Nothing but gratitude, friendship —”

“Gratitude! Friendship! Mollie, Mollie, am I on my knees asking either? There is another word —”

“I cannot,” she said. “I cannot.”

A strange expression came into his face.

“This night has opened your eyes to the fact that I love you. You are in no condition to say a single word to me, and though you told me that you hated me as only you can say it, Mollie, I would not believe you. You must trust me. When I ask you to put your hands — these hands — into mine, for good, I do not want your friendship nor your gratitude; nor your prayers, if you do not bind our names together. I want you — *you*. For my own, for my wife, until death parts us. And, unless you can tell me that you love another, by heaven my wife you shall be, let the obstacles appear mountain high. Try to care for me a little before that day arrives.”

It was an odd wooing — and from a man like John Rollinson. But then the girl was Mollie Farrell.

CHAPTER XX

MRS. WARDEN GIVES ADVICE

MRS. WARDEN had known nothing of the catastrophe that threatened to overwhelm Mollie's brother, but she had lain awake the better part of the night, fretting at the remembrance of the girl's weary face. She knew that Mollie Farrell believed in her and trusted her, and that she would hear everything in the end — but she felt that no trifling misfortune brought that look to her countenance. And now after her night of worry a strange Mollie came to meet her — a new Mollie, a transfigured Mollie. John Rollinson might be the man who loved her, but her brother Dan was safe. That was the insuperable, the wonderful fact — her brother Dan was safe. The burden had been shifted from her. Some one had taken her cares for his own — because he loved her — and for a while she breathed more freely.

Nor could she — used to delaying long before accepting even a trifling joy for fear of possible disappointment — keep back the gladness that the night had brought. She gave Mrs. Warden some of the deep regard that she had for the few who were near to her, and this morning that regard seemed intensified. The world was a pleas-

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

ant place in which to live, mankind all noble and all generous. Ah! it is the way we take it that makes life for us. If joyous, the earth is clad in verdure and the caroling of birds sounds in our hearts; if sad, the earth is gray and gloomy, the birds fled with a summer that will never live again.

Mollie Farrell was happy. With glowing eyes she met the glances of the people who passed her by, and who turned after passing to gaze at her once more. Yet her face was so wistful, even in its happiness, that Mrs. Warden caught her breath.

She said nothing — nor did Mollie, that being Mollie's nature. She would tell her later on — she would tell her after she got used to the thought that *perhaps* it was true, perhaps John Rollinson — Her face colored, and she answered a question Mrs. Warden put to her, with some confusion.

“Harold Seymour has promised to come as soon as you will arrange to spend the evening with me—at least, I have made that stipulation,” her friend was saying, casually, easily. “When may I expect you? He is in fine feather these days, Mollie.”

“I would like to hear him,” said Mollie. “If I can go, I shall be glad. But it won't be for a few weeks —” she hesitated.

“You certainly give him much encouragement,” said Mrs. Warden, and there was a little bitterness in her tone.

“How can I?” asked Mollie, helplessly. “How can I?”

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

A smile hovered over Mrs. Warden's mouth at the note in the girl's voice.

"What a question!" she exclaimed.

"But I am indifferent," said Mollie. "If you would only persuade him into a proper state of mind, I could learn to value his friendship. Dear Mrs. Warden, what in the world can he like in me?"

"Your manner, probably; your ways — which are you, Mollie, and which make your personality so striking," said Mrs. Warden. "You are so independent — so indifferent. Be indifferent. The frigid and unfeeling thrive the best."

"I do not think so," said Mollie, slowly. "They miss too much."

"My dear, I am sixty — you twenty. You guess — I know."

"They miss too much," reiterated Mollie. "What people are to-day that frigidness and coldness attract them I do not know or care. I don't want to know or care."

"There it is," said Mrs. Warden, with an odd smile. "You do not want to know or care. You are frigid and you are cold. That is why Harold Seymour loves you."

"Do not," said Mollie; "for I will not take his love." The strong nature of her glowed in her face. "If I dream of accepting any man's love, it will not be because he cares for me for my indifference."

"Why, Mollie!" Mrs. Warden opened her eyes at the vehemence in her tones.

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

“No,” went on the girl; “to take some one into your life from whom you would have to hide *yourself*, for fear you could not retain his affection? That is what you mean? Take some one into your life whom you could not take into every corner of your heart, and show every thought of your turbulent, unhappy soul, satisfied that he would be sorry for you, and love you for your weakness —”

The cynicism which was part of Mrs. Warden’s character brought the laugh to her lips — and at the sound of it the light died out of Mollie’s eyes.

“Foolish little visionary,” she said. “No matter how weak a woman is, she is no weaker than the strongest man. Weakness! Where would a man find weakness in you?”

Mollie raised her eyebrows: “Mrs. Warden,” she said, “you know you do not believe half the harsh things you say.”

“Of the average women, I do,” said Mrs. Warden. “Indifference is a good thing to preach to her; and even to those above the average, like yourself, considering that men are — what they are.” And again she laughed. “But I know you care little for this discussion.” She waited a few moments, looking at the half-averted countenance. Her tone changed then, so that it did not seem to be that of the same woman. “What has happened to you? Tell me.”

And Mollie told her, simply as a child might tell some wonderful tale that it knew was true, yet almost doubted.

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

Mrs. Warden listened without a word of comment, but gradually, as the tale unfolded, a shadow clouded brow and eyes. As a sun-bright day, glorious with light, grows dark and gloomy almost without warning, so did the gentleness leave her face, and it grow forbidding.

Mollie had learned wisdom through her own unhappiness. One by one the words came slower, until they died away before the strange expression upon her friend's features. She was silent, half fearful of unknown danger, for she knew that somewhere, somehow, connected with the love that had made Mrs. Warden's life a paradise for one short while, there was also a tragedy. It had cast its darkness over her; she had never emerged from it. So she put out her nervous fingers, and clasped Mrs. Warden's warm and beautiful hand, divining her mood almost by intuition.

"I make you sorrowful," she said; "my story has made you sorrowful, so I shall say no more."

"No, my little Mollie—I rejoice that you are happy," said Mrs. Warden. "But if only it had not been John Rollinson!"

"Not John Rollinson!" echoed Mollie. "Mrs. Warden? What do you mean?"

"I know him; at least," she corrected herself hastily, "I know of him. He has a reputation for great cleverness—and a sternness equally as great. And he is rich, while you are poor, Mollie. Have you thought of that? His father was well-known, proud, popular, of the best blood in the States. His son is the same."

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

Mollie shrank. Not one thought had she given to John Rollinson's wealth or position—and now they frightened her. What did she want with wealth or position—she, a daughter of the people? What unknown responsibilities were awaiting her?

What responsibilities? His wife, he had said. She caught her breath, sharply. *His wife!* He had said the words—but not even now could she realize their meaning. It would be truly a new existence. She had seen but one side of the matter: that he was good and that he cared for her; and then she made secret, exultant confession that she loved him in return, with a love that would grow with his and keep pace with it. True test of an enduring affection: the love that can measure itself by that which is given it! Mollie turned as pale now as Mrs. Warden herself—pale to the very lips.

“I knew his father,” said Mrs. Warden. “He was just such a man as John Rollinson is to-day. I have watched him—gone where I could see him; and it is surprising that the bitterness in me did not tell him who I was, though he passed me by as a stranger and one beneath his notice. Mollie, he was haughty and clever, and handsome and wealthy. He loved the good things of life, he loved his own way. He married. Married a girl like you, Mollie. She gave up kith and kin for him and did her pitiful best to reach his level. She bore his name, was the mother of his child, and she worshiped husband and baby, making of both her idols. God punished her for it.”

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

Her voice broke. She spoke as one might speak who had long lived the tale in memory, and who now, putting it into words, was parting with her life.

“She was so ignorant of all the paltry usages and miserable rules that made the refinements of existence for him. She had beauty — beauty that was her curse. People liked her for that beauty, and were sorry for her because she was so timid and so frightened. She was young, dear, and she prayed so hard that she might be worthy of her husband.”

Mollie turned her head away.

“She did not succeed, however,” went on that low voice, “and one day, in a fit of anger, discontent, disgust, call it what you like, he taunted her, he whom she loved so, with the poverty from which she came and the ignorance she brought with her! And then she saw it was no use. How could she force herself on this man who would but grow to detest her in the end? To burden her little son with such a mother — that little son, who, taught by his father, would despise her, too? The prospect frightened her. She left them both — a mad thing to do, but she did it.”

“Poor girl, poor girl!” said Mollie.

“Indeed, poor girl! She knew what the sacrifice meant — it was the end of all things — the end. That is the story of John Rollinson’s father.”

“Perhaps he was sorry,” said Mollie, almost in a whisper. “He must have grieved for her —”

“His heart was too proud and cold to grieve for any

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

one. What the father has done, the son will do. Mollie, to see your life a repetition of that broken-hearted girl's—”

She paused, overcome.

“You look up to me,” she resumed brokenly; “you tell me that I am good. Child, I wish you could see my heart. I wish you could understand how I hated John Rollinson's father, how I dislike John Rollinson himself. I never thought that detested name would cross my path—and it has. To think of *you* in connection with him! Mollie, it is but a girl's fancy. History repeats itself. Do not give yourself to a man who will scorn you.”

There was great pleading in her voice. Mollie, with bent head, walked on beside her.

“I have feared something of this sort since that morning when you told me of your meeting, and I tried my very best to show you how much Harold Seymour cares for you. That was the principal reason, Mollie—I felt he was the better man and wished to compel you to recognize his good qualities, that his nearness might attract you, that you might grow to esteem him with a warmer feeling than that of friendship. You seem to have been blind to my wishes in this matter, but as true as you are a living, breathing girl, John Rollinson will break your heart. His father broke another woman's, and the son will break yours.”

Mollie's brows were drawn together; she drew a long breath.

Mrs. Warden gives Advice

“It may be that John Rollinson will be sorry, Mrs. Warden,” she began. “I may regret, as that poor girl did, that I have allowed him to sacrifice himself. But why has he said such things? I have not the beauty which you say won his father; nor am I meek, being stubborn and self-willed. He knows me. He saw me before you did — an unkempt, barefooted, miserable, unhappy child! He must care for something in me which I am not aware that I possess, surely, — or is it because I am so unlovable that you predict such things? Oh, no, Mrs. Warden,” she went on, and her tones quivered, “let me keep my new happiness a little longer. Afterward, perhaps, when I have time to think, and to wonder and to question myself, the joy will not be so unalloyed. But now I must keep it just a while.”

Mrs. Warden looked into the misty, dark eyes, straight down into the girl’s strong heart. She saw there the supplication that Mollie could not, would not hide from her, and the conviction struck home that, come weal or woe, Mollie Farrell’s lot was cast. Mrs. Warden was not faultless, nor free from bitterness, nor from prejudice — but she resolved, with a sudden uplifting of spirit, to protect and shield the girl she loved as far as lay in her power.

“Mollie,” she said hastily, “may God forbid that I should pain you. Be happy, dear, be happy. God does all for the best.”

CHAPTER XXI

TWO WEEKS LATER

IT was typical November weather, even though the month had barely begun; gray, with a chill in the air — a chill that struck into the marrow, and made one keep moving to avoid physical discomfort. And yet it was beautiful.

Summer, in haughty disapproval, had left naught behind her but that bank of ashy clouds, reminding one of an expression of displeasure on a proud and well-loved face. The pallid leaves that carpeted the roadway seemed to feel this displeasure, too, for they lay quiet, content, their colors dull because the sun was not there to warm them into life. The trees were stripped of their glorious coats of gold and bronze and crimson; they were sad indeed, in the promise of winter's desolation, but in no way humbled.

Nature, early in November, has still to learn the dreariness that will be hers in a few short weeks, so that Mollie Farrell was happy as she walked along the quiet path, her hands filled with leaves. Life is so noisy and so boisterous that it stuns the soul. One needs the freshness of country lanes, the quiet of starlit nights, to bring it to its waking state. And Mollie, coming from

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a spot where all was noise and tumult and confusion, was enjoying one of her rare days, getting close to the heart of the wise mother who loves to whisper sweet messages to those of her children who care to hear. She whispered them to Mollie Farrell, who loved, and understood, and saw God in all the beauty about her, who felt His power in the tiniest creation of His infinite hands.

Not only must great thoughts come in solitude — they are best appreciated in solitude. Mollie Farrell had no higher gift for great thoughts than the average clean-minded, right-living man or woman, but a hint of God's omnipotence dawns at some time upon the mutest soul. Human nature is alike in its essentials, and there is the divine element in each of us. No two people see the same scene with the same eyes, no two people realize the wonder of a divine thought on a human problem with the same degree of intensity. No two people, either, have the same gift of expression. Be satisfied that you can feel. Perhaps God has adjusted the balance in this wise — that while your lips are dumb, your spirit is eloquent, bringing you where words never could.

Mollie Farrell belonged to that great army of human beings whose lips are sealed. The glory of God's universe made her quiet life beautiful. She lifted the eyes of her soul to inaccessible regions. It was not all sorrow, this month of November, with the pale gray of its skies, the sharpness of its air. What if the children of the trees strewed path and lane! Offspring of the great mother, these solemn trees had borne many years of chil-

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dren and seen them disappear in just the self-same way. Later, when rude winds came and rude weather, they would be thrown hither and thither, their frail little limbs unable to withstand the winter's freezing breath, and the trees would toss their bare arms in hungry mother-love. Then would the snow come, like the mantle of a kindly sympathy, making fleecy pall for the delicate little things, covering them from view.

It was no new impulse that had prompted the girl to take this long ride alone, nor was she a stranger here, though her visits were few, seeing how her life was rounded out by arduous duty. To-day she was free, and to-day she was another being. Her training in the past helped her. She had fought so often against tormenting and annoying things that now it was sufficient for her to resolve to banish them. She brought up old memories, but without sorrow. She had no fear for Dan. She trusted John Rollinson—and because he had said it she knew that Dan was saved. The garment of melancholy dropped from her. She had not seen her lover since the night which had been the turning point in her life—that night on which he told her that he cared for her—and it was two weeks now. Two weeks! They had flown on magic wings. She realized, in all its fulness, the truth that it is our belief in our friends, far or near, that makes them ours. Many see and hear and have the daily companionship of those bound to them by closest ties—and yet have nothing.

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And Mollie, who had had for an ideal that grave and good man, to feel now that he claimed equality meant that God had blessed her. Her strong nature must eventually have sought and found a grade above the level on which circumstances placed her; but it was John Rollinson who had given substance to that craving after better things. She had felt the difference then, though ignorant. Her ignorance was a thing of the past now; she had reached John Rollinson's plane; would go beyond it—and take him with her. She was no saint, this girl. If strong natures seem to have the most rewards, spiritually or in a worldly sense, it is also true that they have to fight the hardest for them. If she suffered many things in silence, her main motive was to suffer so for the Lord's sake, because her Church pointed out to her the meaning of all suffering, and whither it tends. If she did her duty, it was because her knowledge, enlightened by faith, showed her what duty well-performed means to the soul. If she controlled her rebellious heart, it was because self-mastery is needful to one who holds as her most precious treasure that religion which Christ taught with extended arms and thorn-crowned head. This silent suffering, this duty, this self-control, were often borne and exercised as you and I bear and exercise them—mechanically, with a feeling of protest stirring underneath. But afterward! How sweet the taste is, and the fruit, how wholesome!

She had tasted it all, the sweet fruit and the bitter, for, like you and me, she was not always able to con-

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quer herself. To-day, with the gladness that is the birthright of youth stirring in her veins, she had come out into the open, out into solitude, out to the quiet of the brown earth, the gray sky. She had smiled at God so often in the midst of pain, and now she lifted her thin, dark face upward so that she could see the heavens through the trees, and laughed aloud. It was glorious to feel so happy that she could not gauge her happiness.

There was still that light in her eyes, and her lips were curved in a smile as she turned, with a last farewell glance down the lane which had been her joy's confessional. She did not see the young man coming along the sidepath, walking idly as men do whose thoughts are far off. His hands were clasped behind him and he was quite close to the girl before he recognized her. He was too astonished, too glad, then, to speak. She had been with him at that moment, she had been with him all that day, and here she stood before him smiling, her face lighted up. He had never seen her wear such happy guise. He had grown to love her in the shadow, with the sad little lines about eyes and mouth, and now she looked at him, transfigured, to his ardent glance altogether desirable, as is the plainest woman in the world to the man who truly cares for her.

"Mr. Seymour!" she exclaimed, giving him a welcoming hand.

"Is it really you, Miss Farrell, or your ghost?"

"It is really I," she made answer. "I did not im-

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agine I should meet any one I knew — this place is so far away.”

“ Westchester is still part of the United States — as well as near to New York City,” he said, laughing. “ Were you not aware that this is my home ? ”

“ Is it really ? We are neighbors then. Do you see that long path ? That is *my* home — that is where I actually live.”

She pointed down the path, which seemed to grow narrower and narrower as it stretched away from them, until the clustering trees made dusky ending. “ You might imagine — ” she turned, as she spoke, away from it, and he turned with her, walking slowly — “ that I would not be able to find it again, because there are so many similar ones about here. But I never make a mistake. Sometimes, when I have not been able to get to it in a long time I dream of it, and the dear old trees seem to shake their branches at me in disapproval.”

She had never spoken like this to any one in her life — least of all to Harold Seymour. But she liked him, and she trusted him, as did all women who knew him, and her heart was too full of her own joy to remember that Mrs. Warden had declared that this man loved her. Rather, it was part of her perfect day to take up her train of thought and go on with it, putting words to the music in her heart.

“ See ! ” She displayed a handful of leaves, yellow and gold and sunset crimson. “ These are the children of one beautiful old tree that gets particularly annoyed

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at my neglect. I am bringing them home — it will be so long before I can come back again.”

“I never knew you were romantic,” he said. He was elated beyond measure at the confidence her tones implied.

“No?” She drew her brows together. “Is — is romantic the right word? Well, perhaps it is, if you use it in its highest sense. This life here — the real life of me that I leave down that path is a romance, a world of dreams. But in it I am content.”

She sighed happily, and Harold Seymour did not speak again for some moments. Then he broke the silence.

“You are going straight home?” he asked.

“Yes. It will be five o'clock before I reach there, and my poor mother will be famished. This is Susan's Sunday out, you know,” with a smile. “I take a day of dissipation occasionally. After supper, if my mother is as well as she was this morning, I go to Mrs. Warden's for a few hours.”

“Why, I am going, too!”

“That will be pleasant — probably she intended to surprise me. Your violin?”

“Is at Mrs. Warden's. I am going down with you.” Mollie hesitated.

“I should like to ask you to supper,” she said frankly, “but I don't know if it is right — I am very ignorant of the convenances — nor do I know what I'll be able to get ready, for I've been away most of the day. And then my mother might not like it.”

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He laughed until the tears came.

“Anything you ‘get ready’ would be more than I deserved. But because of reason No. 3, I’ll dine somewhere else.”

She made jesting answer, and he replied, and the conversation did not languish. It seemed the realization of his dreams that the girl he loved was here beside him, her hand on his arm, for the road had grown rough and he was assisting her. And Mollie, who saw happiness just then in all around her, looked at him with her joyous eyes, buoying up his hopes with her laughing words, bubbling over with the gladness that another’s love had brought her.

* * * * *

It was the same during that long evening. Mrs. Warden, with a faint hope at the bottom of her heart that all would come right in the end between these two whom she loved, was delighted beyond measure at their evident pleasure in each other’s companionship. Mollie was almost frivolous, and man and woman responded to her singular mood. Never did moments fly more quickly. Both musicians played, and played well, and Mollie listened, thinking what a fitting close this was to her beautiful day. After that Mrs. Warden bade them follow her to her little kitchen-dining-room, where “Harry,” as she familiarly called him, and Mollie set the table with her fine linen and pretty china. It was a very domestic scene.

“What do you think Miss Farrell said to me this

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afternoon?" asked Harold Seymour. "That she would permit me to come to supper with her, but she wasn't sure if it were right or if she'd have any supper — and her mother might object."

"Of course you insisted," laughed Mrs. Warden.

"Not I — I didn't dare. I was afraid she'd have a fourth reason up her sleeve."

"I had," said Mollie, promptly. "I'd have told you you couldn't come."

"Mollie has no qualms of conscience in saying what she means," declared Mrs. Warden.

"I'm beginning to think that way myself — Miss Farrell, you've put the sugar-shell in the butter-dish."

"Why — you just did that —"

"Mrs. Warden —"

"Oh, no! You saw the mistake, Mr. Seymour — rectify it. Come, both of you — tea is ready."

She made a charming hostess — her refined and delicate countenance with its frame of snowy hair a perfect picture as she took her own place, smiling at them. No matter how she tried, she could not grasp the thought that another's shadow loomed big upon her horizon, that Mollie's future was to be spent away from her, for marriage with John Rollinson meant just that; that genial Harold Seymour's life was to be clouded, because a man who could have many, in her opinion better-suited to him, chose to woo and to wed this dear daughter of her heart. She was self-willed, used to compassing her desires — and she fought this turn of fate with all her

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power, denying its possibility. Unfortunately, Mrs. Warden had had one bitter experience—and she refused to see the heights to which a man might rise. To her there was no such thing as self-sacrifice possible for John Rollinson. She was prejudiced, of course, and though, generally, people with prejudices make life interesting, she would not understand that Mollie Farrell's eyes were clear, her head well balanced, and that no inferior nature could claim her allegiance. The doctrine of indifference which she had preached might serve as a general rule, considering the capabilities of the average man, and the attractions of the average woman. But not for John Rollinson, nor for Mollie.

So she gave full play to all the brightness of wit that much and careful intercourse with books and literature had given her. She was clever and charming and interesting, and they, loving her, yielded to her spell.

As for Mollie, she had not advanced far enough upon her new path, she had not come to that stage where the presence of the man she loves is necessary to round out every pleasure. She had not learned, as yet, to say pleasant words, casual words, with little meaning for other ears, but full of meaning to the one whose eyes met hers in perfect understanding. And if, in the days that followed, Harold Seymour's lot seemed hard and thorny, and his path one of disappointments, he looked back upon this one evening. It was a memory he cherished with a tenderness that most of us have for our castles in Spain, promises, often, of what is never to be. He was

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enjoying himself now, with a calm contentment that appeared to be the blessed omen of a peaceful future. He sat back, watching Mollie and Mrs. Warden engaged in the household duties that are so suited always to a woman, and he asked himself, suddenly, when, how soon, he could have a home like this; a treasure-house, a palace, with the dark-eyed girl he loved its most precious jewel, its queen. They went again into the parlor. In a very short while Mollie would be going home. He knew that Mrs. Warden would allow him to escort her there alone. He might have a chance to say something of this sort to her, something that might make her think of him a little more tenderly; take an interest in him. Thus he dreamed as the moments fled, and Mollie's face and presence made of that dream reality.

She was sitting listening to their gay banter, a smile upon her lips, her arms thrown above her head and resting on the broad back of the chair, when there came an impetuous step along the hall; and then a knock. With a frown of annoyance, not unmixed with surprise, Mrs. Warden gave an involuntary glance at the timepiece on the mantel. It was almost nine o'clock. She turned an expectant, questioning countenance toward the door as she said "Come in."

John Rollinson entered.

Mrs. Warden stood aside, a feeling akin to desperation coming over her as she caught sight of him. He did not see Mrs. Warden. He did not see Harold Seymour. He did not know there was any one in that room but

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one; that its other occupants were strangers. He saw nothing, no one but Mollie. Slowly she raised her eyes to his. She was quite pale, but Harold Seymour, looking at her, *knew*. He knew. There was no need of speech, — not with those two eloquent faces. Very quietly he laid the instrument he held down in its open case, took up his hat with shaking fingers, and left the room. Mrs. Warden said nothing — she could not. She closed the door behind him. Then she, too, went away.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE

JOHAN ROLLINSON had only an imperfect knowledge of Washington, although, from the slight interest he had taken in social life in his own city, he had made some acquaintances there, and one or two firm friends in influential circles. It was a new sensation to this man to be soliciting even so trifling a favor — a unique experience to find himself in his present situation. On the whole, however, the way was made easy for him.

It was Saturday of the second week of his visit. He might have been back in New York ten days or more had he relied on promises — but he was determined to have proof positive in his hands before he returned to Mollie. Final settlement was promised for that morning; when the papers were dispatched, he would leave Washington — not until then. He missed his active life and the duties that engrossed his time, the hours of study and reading, the hurry and flurry of his everyday affairs. He had never thought himself so attached to his home or to his work. But most singular of all, and greater than all, he missed Mollie Farrell. He, who had never seen her save at rare intervals, felt now that her absence made a blank in his life.

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Like all good men, John Rollinson had a great respect for women. He enjoyed their society, realizing that it is the mission of woman to keep alive, by her gentleness, all that is generous in the sterner sex. Naturally aggressive, man would lose sight of the beauty of existence in striving after its utility, if woman were not given him as a help-meet, gaining admission into his innermost soul, and bringing tenderness into his life with her. He had not frittered away the best emotions of his heart playing at love. He had often wondered, knowing his father as he did, how a man so professedly an aristocrat could have married beneath him — could have been fascinated enough to make that woman his wife — and yet could have been harsh enough to drive her from him. He had indeed cared for her at first for her great beauty — but the honest husband-love had not come until she was lost to him forever. Then the bond which had linked those two lives together asserted its power. The sacrament which had made them one exerted its supremacy, and all his remaining years the older man craved the companionship of that other half of him, lacking which his life had been empty even to the day he died.

So, while John Rollinson had been a dutiful and an affectionate son, not alone yielding his father a filial love, but revering him for a character that had grown noble under suffering, above all and more than all, he loved and pitied the girl-mother, who, from a sense of duty and in a spirit of self-sacrifice (mistaken, if you

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will) had put the barrier of self-effacement between them. He knew — understanding a woman's heart by intuition — the awfulness of that sacrifice.

And now this love for Mollie Farrell had come to him. Says Mrs. Hemans : —

“ There is strength
Deep-bedded in our hearts, of which we reck
But little, till the shafts of heaven have pierced
Its fragile dwelling. Must not earth be rent
Before its gems are found ? ”

With this new affection welling in every vein, he felt the existence of this strength of which he had known nothing heretofore. No question that was of earth could affect his love. He was content to know that she would trust him with her future, and what he would make that future he asked God to give him power to do as he had the will. He welcomed his joy as a gift of God, and taking it gave it back again into the Giver's hands, asking His blessing upon it.

It was impossible, with sentiments like these, that a single doubt or fear or unworthy thought could dim the glory of his joy. He planned great deeds, great actions, in which she would be participator and doer likewise. He included Mrs. Farrell's welfare in his happiness. She should have not merely the necessities of her state, but the luxuries that would do so much to ease her remaining years. He knew that even at the most her years would be but few. Well, when that time came,

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Mollie would not be left alone. And even Dan, luckless unfortunate, should have his chance.

It pleased his simple heart to think of all these things, knowing that he could bring them to fulfilment. Is there any task too mighty when it is to be performed for one we love? We face hardships, responsibility — and shrink, affrighted, at the thought of burdens which are surely beyond our strength. But let Love — foolish, happy, merry, unconcerned little god that he is! — let him clasp our hand and answer our doubting frown with that gay and glorious smile of his, and the burdens are feather-light, the hardships trifles.

His pleasant reveries were broken in upon now by the entrance of a bellboy, who brought some mail. A few days previous, John Rollinson had met a certain Carrol Trevor, and been much attracted by him. The attraction proving mutual, they had had a long conversation, bordering on intimacy. The New Yorker discovered that Trevor was not only well-acquainted with a Washington physician whom he was anxious to meet, but that he had the entrée to his house, and would gladly take him there if Dr. Grant were willing. One of the letters brought to Rollinson now was from this Trevor, couched in the most cordial terms, and it showed that his new friend had lost no time. Dr. Grant was a recluse. He had given up the practice of his profession a score of years before, after having made a name for himself; but Mr. Trevor's letter inclosed an invitation, making an appointment for two o'clock that afternoon.

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A little later John Rollinson had his final interview concerning "Jerry Phelan's" exchange. The matter was concluded at last; the final papers had been sent off, and "Jerry Phelan" would have no one but himself to thank if he didn't become a man worthy of his sister. John Rollinson's first impulse when he reached the street was to throw up his hat, but as the spectacle of a grave young man in glasses playing handball with his hat might have roused suspicions as to the grave young man's sanity, he refrained. His next thought was to send a telegram to Mollie. A telegram! What could he say in a telegram? Dearly as he had wished to write to her, full as his brain and heart had been of her, he had denied himself the pleasure. He would say what he had to say only to her listening ears — not on insensible paper that could not plead for him.

And then an almost gloomy thought followed on that impulse of pleasure.

"I must ask her to come to me with my trust unfulfilled, after all," he said; "there will be the same shadow on my new life. Yes — for the doubt of my mother's fate will always be an unsettled question to vex me."

He walked on, with lined forehead and grave eyes.

"What can I do," he asked, "after twenty-eight years? What else is left to be done? Nothing. Surely God has some wise purpose in concealing her fate from me. I shall let it drop — I shall look no farther — I shall try no more. But from now on I pledge myself anew to generosity — I shall be generous as my duties

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will permit me — for my mother's sake, and for Mollie's. Twice-blest indeed — with a holy memory and a blessed reality!"

* * * * *

Mr. Trevor met him promptly at the hour designated.

"You may not be aware that you are going to an art museum this afternoon?" said he, after they had exchanged words of greeting.

"I was not aware of it," answered Rollinson.

"Dr. Grant is one of the greatest collectors in the States. Collecting is his absorbing passion, and when it grew on him he gave up his practice, feeling that he could not serve two masters. But I should not tell you this — I don't want to spoil your first impressions."

"I understood that he would see no one — would not visit any one."

"That is the truth. But my father and he were chums together, born on plantations that lay side by side in Virginia. Dr. Grant is my uncle."

"You are fortunate," said John Rollinson, with heartiness.

"I know it," was his new friend's answer, smiling.

The house, situated in the beautiful northwestern section of Washington, was a palace in itself, and its owner a courteous Southerner who welcomed John Rollinson with that fine hospitality characteristic of his native State. The very entrance to the house suggested its uniqueness. The doors were old, oaken, rivet-studded, and Dr. Grant had a story to tell of the fateful scenes

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they had witnessed in a Spanish palace before he transported them to an American gentleman's residence. Inside the lofty hall were marble statues; the ceiling was sculptured with allegorical designs, scrolls, and inscriptions. John Rollinson felt as if he had drifted from a commonplace present into an historic past, as his host preceded him into the reception room — its floor of mosaic, its tapestried walls, and frescoed ceiling. And so on from room to room, in which were shown beautiful paintings, autographs, coins, bits of Egyptian pottery, figures worked in ivory, stuffs from Eastern lands, old Dutch porcelain, and battered silverware.

"I don't like to see beautiful things in a hurry," said John Rollinson; "one cannot appreciate them."

"It would take years to appreciate these," laughed Carroll Trevor. "Almost everything here has a history. But uncle has one collection in his study which I like more than anything else he possesses — miniatures. They are the dearest treasures of his heart."

"And of yours," said Dr. Grant. "Well, they'll belong to you some day, Carroll."

"They are safer in your keeping," said Trevor, earnestly.

Dr. Grant smiled at him affectionately. Then he led the way into the apartment which Carroll Trevor had called his study. Here again the collector was in evidence, but Dr. Grant did not particularize. There was a tray, with wine and glasses, on the dark table, and the host motioned them to the chairs in readiness. Then he

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turned to a heavy oak cabinet that stood at one side of the room. Watching him, John Rollinson fully understood that his collection of miniatures was Dr. Grant's hobby. He fingered them lovingly, and he sketched the history, either of the times in which the picture was painted or the person represented, in a way that was absorbingly interesting, taking up the dainty things one after the other, holding them out for inspection. At the last, after all the others had been replaced in the cabinet, he drew out a worn leather case and opened it.

“I have a dozen here — the work of a comparatively unknown man,” he said. “A man who died before he was thirty, but who would have attained a wonderful height had he but lived another decade. If you care to hear his story —”

John Rollinson knew it was worth listening to by the manner in which he spoke. One by one Dr. Grant handed over for his inspection the beautiful, tiny paintings, executed with a fineness of line and a daintiness of coloring that seemed marvelous.

“I am not a connoisseur,” he said, “but I have never seen anything like this before. Who was he? Why, these do not speak of human attractions. Look at that child's face. He has caught its very soul.”

Dr. Grant's eyes kindled.

“You may not be a connoisseur,” he said, “but you are the first man who put into words what my poor friend really accomplished. The man who painted these wonderful faces has been dead twenty years.”

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“What a pity!” said John Rollinson. “And without attaining his ambition, doubtless — that is generally the way.”

“Ambition!” said Dr. Grant, dreamily. He looked down at the miniatures spread out upon the table, slipping his hands over them with tenderness. “Ambition!” he repeated. “Gold or fame, or honor, or achievement! It is just the same old bait, and we are all to be caught with it. Century after century the world dangles it temptingly on the same old hook — and it’s pride and it’s pleasure and it’s love or ambition! Anything to suit the taste; anything to catch the eye! And when it has won you and chained your senses so that every aspiration beyond it wears a shackle, off it goes to some one younger and as venturesome as once you were, with its dangling hook and its tempting bait, leaving you to flounder high and dry, and bear — the consequences.”

“That means that Uncle Grant feels that in turning collector he has shirked his responsibilities,” said Carroll Trevor.

“If these are the consequences,” said John Rollinson, pointing to the miniatures with a smile, “I should have no regret.”

Dr. Grant looked at the young man keenly.

“That was a digression,” he said. “Your words awoke that train of thought and I followed it up — which is a way of mine, as you would discover, if you were often in my company. As for these,” touching them

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gently, "I only know the joy of possession — not creation, which is the keener joy. I'll tell you the artist's story if you care to hear it."

"Yes," said John Rollinson.

"In common with most of his kind he longed to do something out of the ordinary. He waited for events to direct him, although his peculiar style of painting was even then attracting attention.

"One day a gentleman called on him, bringing with him a small portrait — the portrait of a girl. He said it was that of a dear relative, and hearing of his skill, he had come to him, leaving it to his judgment to make something odd of it, something striking. You know Browning's words: 'If one could have that little head of hers painted on a background of pale gold' ? At the first glimpse of the portrait these lines came instantly to the poet-artist's mind. It was so beautiful a face, full of life and spirit, yet with something sorrowful ready to peep through its girlish unconcern. He accepted the commission. He did not know what he would do with it — but he could promise a unique conception. He began almost at once to paint miniatures — these odd dozen that you see," he indicated the ones lying on the table. "He called them trial efforts, and he reserved his technique for that ideal face, and would not touch it until his hand was true. He finished the work. When his patron came, he gave it to him. And as payment he asked that he might be made acquainted with the original, for in painting her he had grown to love her.

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“‘She is not to be loved,’ was the cold reply.

“‘Tell me,’ urged the artist, ‘is she happy? Is she free? Is there anything she needs that human hands can bestow upon her?’

“‘She needs but one thing,’ was the solemn answer: ‘but one, and that is denied her. She does not look like this any more — from those eyes shine out the sorrow of a broken heart, and these lips are set in lines that tell of tears. She has wept her strength away, poor little girl!’

“‘And no one can help her?’

“‘No one — she is dying, and there is nothing she needs but the hastening of that day. If you have grown to care for her, pray that she may soon be released.’

“Well,” continued Dr. Grant, very softly, “my words may sound like the ravings of a man who has grown old in the midst of old and beautiful things, and who is inclined to lay too much stress on the stories connected with them. But this tale is modern, and when I show you the face of that girl, you will not wonder at it. Though he gave up the first miniature he was allowed to keep the photograph, from which he painted another. I was given the second as the most precious of gifts.”

“Before you open the case,” said Carroll Trevor, not a little surprised that his uncle related this story to John Rollinson, “tell us what happened to the artist.”

“The artist? His was one of those dreamy, poetic temperaments — he brooded over the one idea and let it

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prey upon him. He never succeeded in dislodging that girl from his heart. He was stricken a few years afterward with an incurable disease—that was how I became acquainted with him—and he told me he was glad to go. He was positive that she was dead.”

“Intensely romantic, but not practical,” said John Rollinson. To him this savored of sentimentality, and he abhorred it. “It would not be well for the world if there were many like him.”

“I wonder!” returned Dr. Grant. “It is well for the world that there are a few such. I am, I flatter myself, a bit prosaic in spite of my passion for old and artistic things. Nevertheless, when I think of him, something warm stirs my blood. Perhaps it is because I share his enthusiasm for the beauty of the woman he never saw.”

He touched a little spring in the black case which he had been holding on his knee and the top flew up. Then he took the miniature from its bed of velvet, and John Rollinson bent forward eagerly. It was surely one of the sweetest faces that had ever come from the brush of an artist, and here again the soul expression was greatly in evidence. The dark eyes met one's glance appealingly, gentle as a fawn's; soft waves of dark hair curved around shining forehead and graceful throat; the red lips were pleading, smiling, wistful. Nothing could equal the deft touch that had brought out the potential emotions behind those lovely features—the longing and the pathos, the purity and desire for affection.

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“There is a certain fascination in that face for every one,” said Carroll Trevor. “And I have never blamed the artist. It is too bad we know no more about her.”

Dr. Grant shrugged his shoulders.

“I know nothing but what I have told you. I am ignorant of her birth, her origin, whether she was maid, wife, or widow. I do not know the name of the man who ordered the painting. I am as much in the dark as you are — and I like it. It adds to the mystery.”

He turned to John Rollinson, inquiringly, then his expression changed to one of surprise — for there was a bewildered look on the young man’s face. He met Dr. Grant’s eyes with the stupid stare that one gives to people or things when one is half awake. Something had taken the life out of his countenance.

“I am dreaming,” he said in an expressionless voice. “This is only a dream. I’ll wake presently — it will be all right then.”

Trevor looked at him in some anxiety.

“It isn’t possible,” said John Rollinson, still in that quiet tone, as if he were indeed asleep and arguing with himself; “this is just a vagary. I’ve had the subject too much on my mind lately, and I suppose —”

“What is the matter?” asked Trevor, rising from his chair, and laying his hand on the young man’s shoulder.

A look of perplexity shot across John Rollinson’s face.

“It all seems so natural,” he said, looking up at Trevor. “But you understand, don’t you? Why, it’s impossible — I tell you it’s impossible.”

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“Come, come,” said Trevor, puzzled. He shook him. “Wake up, man, wake up.”

“Is he subject to anything of this sort, I wonder?” said Dr. Grant, in a troubled tone. “He seemed perfectly rational —”

John Rollinson sprang to his feet.

“If you wouldn’t mind opening the window?” and his voice was faint. “Thank you. No, no, don’t put the miniature away, Dr. Grant. I am rational — I am all right now.” He took a deep breath of the fresh air and passed his hand over his forehead. Then he went back again to the table. He was deathly pale as he stood looking down at the pictured face.

“I have had a great shock,” he said.

“It is not possible that you recognize the face?” ventured Dr. Grant, hesitatingly.

“Yes.” He detached the charm from his watch-chain. “I may be mistaken — will you satisfy me? That locket contains a picture of my mother — small, but very clear. I should like you both to look. If it is fancy —” His lips, in spite of his self-control, were quivering.

“It is the same,” said Dr. Grant, in an awed voice; “probably a reduction of the photograph from which the miniature was copied. But it is the same — eyes, hair, and everything.

“I do not wonder,” he continued, “that the sight of the miniature unnerved you. And my distressing story! I am so sorry, Dr. Rollinson.”

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“My mother disappeared before I was a year old — almost twenty-nine years ago,” said John Rollinson, “broken-hearted because she imagined that her husband, my father, no longer cared for her. She had no relatives to whom she could have turned, and he searched for her all his life without discovering a single trace. He left the finding of her as a legacy to me. I have done a little indeed, but an effort of that sort after such a space of time seems hopeless on the face of it. Only this very day I felt that this ignorance of her ending was a blot upon my happiness. Tell me, is it not a dispensation of Divine Providence that I should be here — *here*, gazing at a picture of my mother, the first clew in so many years?”

“Strange!” said Dr. Grant. “I have never heard a stranger tale.”

“My father told me of this photograph. It was taken at his earnest desire soon after their marriage. And from your story she must have been dying when this was painted. But where? With whom? For whom was the work executed? What was the man’s name? Surely there is some way of finding out? Surely the artist left papers, letters —”

“Maybe,” said Dr. Grant, courteously. “There were such things, and I have kept them. Yet do not allow that fact to raise your hopes. He was an impractical fellow — probably kept no record —”

“Help me,” said John Rollinson, impetuously, “help me. If you knew how much my peace depends on this!”

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“Everything that can be done shall be done, believe me,” said Dr. Grant. “I will go over every single paper in my possession. Come back here to-morrow morning, and you shall know just how much to expect from this unforeseen occurrence.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLEW AND WHERE IT LED

IT was not the first time in Dr. Grant's experience that he had come across a romance. In fact there was scarcely a treasure in his collection that had not attached to it its humorous or pathetic tale. He knew each one by heart, but dearest of all had been that story of his artist friend, poor Norman. His affection was stronger than he thought for that sad face, on which had been lavished such a wealth of hopeless love. He had known the painter well, as he told John Rollinson, and sympathized with him, for his had been no maudlin sentiment, and no one had ever heard that story from his lips save Dr. Grant alone — nor did Dr. Grant ever repeat it except on rare occasions. It had been told to him in one of those moments that come to every human heart, those sacred moments when the soul expands and pours out its wealth of feeling to one whom it trusts. Never, by the wildest stretch of his imagination, could the old man have anticipated this further development of that eventful tale. He shook his head.

“There is a destiny that shapes our ends,” he said to himself.

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As for John Rollinson, he went back to his hotel dazed and bewildered, thankful for the silent companionship of Trevor, who left him at the door with a shake of the hand. He had taken a liking to John Rollinson, and was anxious to be of service, but he understood that no one could help him at that moment, or do him a greater favor than leave him to himself.

Going to his room, the young man threw himself into a chair. The memory of his mother was so faint, the search had been so fruitless, that no freak of fancy had ever brought success before him. And he owed this to chance! After his father's endeavors, prayers, and hopes, the trained skill that had been brought to bear in the pursuit of one woman, he, John Rollinson, drifted into the study of an antiquary merely to gratify an idle whim — and that idle whim became the means of his great discovery.

“I cannot believe it,” said he. “This is not chance — this is God's hand. There is nothing done by chance. Else why should this come now — *now*, when my mother's fate was the only gray in my happy sky? I will not believe that this is chance.”

He was excited with anticipations of he knew not what. Slowly and deliberately, he began to pace the floor with regular steps and before long his brain ceased to beat in such a maddening fashion and his nervousness abated. He thought of Dr. Grant's last words: —

“Calm yourself. Time is the only preparation for what may be failure. Do not let your hopes rise too high.”

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He felt the wisdom of this advice as he considered the matter in all its aspects. The artist, according to Dr. Grant, had been dead twenty years or more. The picture had been taken while his mother was in her first youth, shortly after she had married Horace Rollinson. That was thirty years ago, for was not he, her son, twenty-nine? How did the man who had the miniature painted secure a copy of the photograph, if she had not given it? And again, according to Dr. Grant, she must even then have been dying. His father's words came back to him : —

“ Whatever she did or wherever she went, I know her heart broke the night she left us.”

John Rollinson sighed, as he sighed over every creature that suffered. That story of Dr. Grant's had power to pain him. If there had been any end to gain by that suffering, it would not have mattered so much —

No end? He drew himself up. No end? He saw the careless, brilliant, godless man of the world humbled, subjected to the chastening rod, and bending gradually until resignation came; until the faith in which he had caused his son to be brought up in memory of the lost one claimed him too, and made him one with her wherever she might be.

A messenger tapped lightly on the door, bearing a note from his official friend, announcing the completion of every detail in “ Jerry Phelan's ” case. He had known that earlier in the day, but he appreciated the thoughtfulness of this final notification. He read the

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letter three times before he took in its full import, because at sight of that name his mind seemed to shake off its confusion. He grew ashamed of the depression that weighed upon his spirits. How little he had to regret, how little he had sacrificed, how much he had to be grateful for! He remembered the calm, staid, even-tempered man who had spoken to Mac Selleck. "My soul is covered up," he had said; "it is a blessed possession, but I am a stranger to it." He was that no longer, and his knowledge brought him nearer to the girl he loved. She had had no one to help her bear the struggle — no one. But now, if God were only kind, not a single shadow would rest upon him or her. "And the Lord do so to me, and more also," he thought reverently, "if ever I betray my trust."

"So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her :
Driving far off each thought of sin and guilt."

A smile curved his lips as somewhere out of the books he loved the words came to him, for these words expressed his feelings that night — "her night and Dan's" as she had called it. It had been his night, too, but he had not known it then.

"Because she is so pure," he said, "because she is so strong, because she is so self-sacrificing. Because, because, because! That is it, thank God — because!"

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They laugh at it as a woman's reason, that word "because." But when our littleness stands face to face with His great majesty, we can only clasp our hands mutely, prayerfully, trustingly, and repeat over and over that great because. Because Thou hast said it, we believe. Because *Thou* hast said it we believe. Not understanding — but because of Thy word. We believe, O Lord, help Thou our unbelief!

* * * * *

His sleep that night was broken, although he succeeded in attaining a certain calmness of mind, and it was with sufficient appearance of composure that he presented himself at Dr. Grant's the next morning after Mass. The old man looked at him approvingly, and ushered him into that room every detail of which would be forever impressed upon his memory. Nothing was said until both were seated at the table. On its dark surface, beside the case containing the miniature, were a number of papers, yellowed with age, and a rusty, worn notebook. John Rollinson felt a strange excitement quiver through his entire frame. His eyes fastened on these greedily. Was the secret there? Was his mother's fate to be revealed? And now Dr. Grant began to speak: —

"Here is every paper Norman left," he said. "I have gone carefully over every single line. I have discovered — nothing."

"Nothing!" John Rollinson started. Dr. Grant raised his hand.

The Clew and Where it Led

“Wait. I am telling my worst news first. In these papers there is absolutely no trace, but in this little book there is an entry — merely a name. I shall not allow you to read any part of it but one — it is too sacred: the uncovering of what was really a wonderful soul. I realized it more fully as I went over the book to-day, and as soon as you have finished I shall destroy it. I would not care to leave it even for the most reverent eyes that might come after mine.”

He need not have feared irreverence from John Rollinson, for the young man took the book almost with awe. He read the few words that meant so much to him.

“Edmund Warden called to-day to see how the Miniature progresses. He is a lawyer, I have discovered. I tried to question him — but I am only an artist! That my future should hinge upon this man’s word, and the dark eyes of an unknown woman!”

“And that is all,” said Dr. Grant. “His name — the name of the man who had the picture made, was Edmund Warden. He was a lawyer, presumably of your own city, for Norman always resided there until a few years preceding his death. Have you ever heard of him?”

“Warden! A lawyer in New York thirty years ago!” There was a note of disappointment in John Rollinson’s voice. “I’m afraid the clew will lead me blind again — the name is strange.” He knitted his brows. “I must thank you for your courtesy to me,” he added in grateful tones, “I —”

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"No, no," exclaimed Dr. Grant, "do not thank me. After all, it's a very slight clew."

"Nevertheless, you —"

"Give it into the hands of some good people," interrupted Dr. Grant again, with an evident dislike to hearing any more words of gratitude from the young man's lips.

"I will," said John Rollinson, rising. "I must start for home at once. I want to reach the city this evening."

"I can sympathize with you," said Dr. Grant. "But, before I forget —" he laid his hand upon his visitor's arm. "We grow attached in spite of ourselves, I think, to some inanimate things, and as we grow older the attachment gains upon us. I have come to look upon this miniature as a personal treasure, though indeed its intrinsic value may be but little. I therefore desire to keep it. When I have no further use for it, it shall be sent to you."

John Rollinson comprehended his meaning. They clasped hands silently, the younger man gratified, the older well pleased. The thoughtfulness of Dr. Grant touched him, and he was much moved, not alone by the emotions that had been his all morning, but by the tenderness of feeling which this expression had induced. His eyes filled with tears — tears he was not ashamed to show as he raised his head.

"You will not mind letting me see it once more?" he asked. "Somehow — it, is not her beauty, I mean

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now — it's the expression, the sentiment, the shadow. She *must* have looked like that. It is impossible, of course, for me to remember her, but that face haunts me."

"I understand," said Dr. Grant. "It haunts every one who has ever seen it."

He opened the case again, and they stood together, looking down at the sweet girlishness portrayed on that background of pale gold; the waves of soft hair, the fawnlike eyes. John Rollinson gazed at it a long time. The tears that had wet his lashes were on his cheeks when he turned away.

"Wherever she went or whatever she did, I know her heart broke the night she left us," he whispered.

CHAPTER XXIV

FRUITION

HIS bag was packed and ready, and he caught the express within the hour. New emotions were stirring in his breast : hope, fear, wonder, strangeness, question. And through it all, yearning.

There was Mollie.

He wanted to tell Mollie all that had occurred. She was waiting for him — the man who loved her, the man she loved. The afternoon dragged by so slowly — but ever as it went the train was rolling nearer and nearer its destination. An eagerness possessed him ; queer fancies surged through his brain. If anything had happened in his absence — if anything were to happen to him now ! He smiled at the impossibility of it — and then he asked himself why it could not be possible. Ah ! But in less than an hour he would be with her, see her —

There was no heed of fatigue. He hailed a cab at the station and ordered the driver to hasten. There was much to be attended to when he reached the modest house that was his home. A great deal of mail had accumulated during his absence. It lay stacked upon his table, but he did not glance at it, and listened to his man's somewhat lengthy recital of important happenings while he removed the signs of travel from his person.

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He cut him short then with a few curt words, telling him to ring up Dr. Kortwright and find out how Mrs. Farrell was. His colleague had not been called to her for a week, so he presumed that she was well. Five minutes afterward he was on his way to Mollie.

It shows how one can identify himself with people and places, for it was here amid these humble surroundings, walking these broken pavements, nodding and smiling to the humble folk who greeted him so cordially — it was here he felt at home. His eyes kindled, his step grew more elastic.

“My life lies here,” he thought with exultation. “I am happy among these people. My whole future is bound up in one of them — my mother was one of them. It must be her blood in me that has made me feel toward them as I do.”

He had no time to meditate further on the consequences of hereditary predispositions, for he found himself at the entrance of the house he sought. “My dear little girl,” he said softly; “my dear little girl!” For his love ennobled even her poor dwelling; his love brightened the faces of those he met; his love took him out of himself.

It was Mrs. Farrell who bade him enter. What a picture of peace she presented, seated at the table, her eyes fastened on a small crucifix that stood before her, the beads of her rosary slipping through her fingers! She looked up, and smiled a glowing welcome into that eager face.

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"God bless you!" she cried; "and how do you do? Let me look at you." She shaded her eyes from the glare of the lamp, and peered at him. "It must have been a terrible thryin' time for you, docther, you're that jaded. Haven't you been well?"

"Perfectly so," answered John Rollinson. "And you — how have you been? You had to see Dr. Kortwright?"

"Oh, yes; I got pretty bad a few days afther you left us. Dr. Kortwright is a fine man, but there's no one like one's own."

John Rollinson glanced searchingly about the room.

"Where's Mollie?" he asked.

"She stepped up the sthreet afther supper," said Mrs. Farrell; "ain't that too bad, an' you wantin' her!"

"I do want her indeed, Mrs. Farrell," he answered gently.

"Well, then, Timmie McCabe'll run up for her just this minute, so he will — it's on'y a step. Wait, an' I'll tap on the wall for him. The childher always come in if I need anything an' Mollie ain't here."

"Never mind," said John Rollinson, "I'm going myself." He drew a chair close to the mother's, and sat beside her. "I want you to understand me, Mrs. Farrell. I don't want Mollie now — I do not want her for a little while, but for all time. I want her to marry me."

Mrs. Farrell looked at him, puzzled.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "You want my Mollie?"

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“I want your Mollie.”

Conflicting emotions followed in rapid succession over that faded, wrinkled face.

“You want Mollie? Ah, but she won’t, Dr. Rollinson. You don’t know Mollie. God help you, docther, but you don’t know that girl when she says —”

“Mrs. Farrell, I think I do — and I think your little Mollie cares for me,” he said; “while I —” He could not go on.

The mother’s brows met.

“My Mollie!” she whispered; “my Mollie! To marry — an’ to go away from me! My little daughter! An’ she cares for you, you say?” She roused herself. “Ah, well, it’s but right, it’s but natural.” A new dignity made the wrinkled face beautiful. Tears stood in her eyes. After a few moments she bent toward him and laid her hand gently on his head.

“I have naught to give my little girl but her mother’s blessing, Dr. Rollinson, an’ she’s earned that — she’s earned that over an’ over.” Again the lump in her throat choked her. “I wish, for your sake, that I was different,” she went on huskily; “some one you could be proud of, instead of an ignorant poor creature who knows but little —”

“Mrs. Farrell!” He grasped her hands in his and held them tightly, his eyes shining; “do not, unless you wish to cause me pain, say such words as those. In God’s sight you are my superior. I have no mother — never had one to remember. Extend, then, the blessing

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you give to Mollie to your son. Accept me for your son, and I shall be a son to you, God helping me, until death. Yes, and after, in the great life we Catholics anticipate together. Mollie's love and mine will go with you to the grave and follow you beyond it. If you go before us, it will still be yours, knowing that you are waiting."

No one could resist the mastery of his voice, the mastery of his manner. And it was characteristic that there was no question of Mollie's equality on the mother's part—simply of her own. For Mollie she expected everything good and beautiful in life. So she smiled through her tears.

"God bless you then, too!" she said tenderly; "God bless you for your mother's sake."

"Amen," he answered. It seemed a long time before he rose to his feet with a question.

"Where is Mollie?" he asked.

"Where would she be when she's away but up at Mrs. Warden's?"

"Mrs. —?" He looked at her in perplexity.

"Mrs. Warden's. You know Mrs. Warden—the lady that was so good to her? A fine, clever woman, an' no mistake, but that proud an' haughty—"

"Mrs. Warden!" repeated John Rollinson. "Mrs. Warden? You are sure? A—a young woman?"

"Not at all—as old as I am if a day, though she don't look it."

"Mrs. Warden! Well!" He drew a deep breath; "what is the number of the house?"

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"No. 213," answered Mrs. Farrell. "She lives on the second floor."

"Thank you — and good-by for a short while. I'll bring Mollie back with me." His brain felt a little hazy as he went downstairs. Mrs. Warden! Oh, no — it was absurd. But the name — Warden. It could not be possible; a similarity, that was all.

Yet, in spite of the confusion which this name brought to his mental faculties, when his eyes fell on Mollie he forgot all else. Forgot everything but that the light on her face was a glorious welcome. The room, its strangeness, the fact that Mrs. Warden was a stranger, and he an intruder on her privacy, faded from his mind — if indeed, he thought of any of these things. He knew that others were present, but it did not matter. Nothing mattered as he stood, looking at her. He did not know that Mrs. Warden had been kind enough to leave them to themselves. Heedless of any one or anything beside, he stood, drinking in the shy embarrassment of his sweetheart's face. She was conscious of a great relief when the door closed behind her friend — but still shyness overpowered her.

"And this is my greeting, Mollie Farrell?" he asked at last. "Aren't you going to speak to me — to welcome me?"

She hesitated — then raised her eyes.

"I should like to," she said. "But I think — I am afraid."

"Afraid of me? Oh, Mollie!"

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"No," she answered slowly, "not of you. I am not afraid of any one, Dr. Rollinson!"

He laughed, proudly, gleefully, at the sudden sparkle that shot across her face.

"I know it," he said. "I could not make you afraid of me, even if I would — Mollie, Mollie," he held out his arms; "is it going to be Dr. Rollinson always?"

He caught her shoulders with both hands and was drawing her close to him, but she held him off with all her strength, a piteous expression quenching the light of defiance.

"You must understand — oh, you must understand me well before I — before you — You *must*, must! Listen to me; just listen to me, won't you? So that afterward you will not say that it is my fault —"

"Mollie —"

"No, no — do not touch me. Let me speak first. It is so strange and so wonderful." She cleared her throat. "I *do* care; I have cared all along; I said I did not until I had to acknowledge that I *did*, and then I fought it and buried it — buried it deep — you are listening to me? — I buried it away from myself. But I cared — and I did not know how much, until that night, and since. Wait — wait — I am not finished: you must listen. I dare not grow to care any more until you fully comprehend me. I have nothing — absolutely nothing. What I have been you know — and what I am, you know — my poverty, my wretchedness. These hands —" she turned up the thin, delicate palms

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—“are empty. I have no talents, no pretty ways, no gentleness — nothing that has made you love me —”

He took her hands in his and placed them on his breast, so that she could feel the heart beneath beating strongly.

“Your hands are not empty now,” he said gravely, “for they hold my heart; they keep my future happiness. Won’t you believe and trust me, Mollie? I don’t want anything but you, you, you! I want you to love me. Of what account are the things you tell me you do not possess? Loveliness! Talents! Gentleness! My girl, just as you are, your face is the most beautiful on earth to me, because I love it. I love you — I love your great black eyes and your little trembling mouth — only because they are *yours*. Only because I love that noble heart of yours and that pure, white soul! Oh, Mollie, Mollie, come!”

She came at that, right gladly, and pressed her cheek where her hands had lain, satisfied. The pain and the sorrow that her life had marked upon her countenance died out of it forever. She felt his tender arm about her, and walked with him into that “new world which is the old.”

CHAPTER XXV

THE UNIVERSAL LAW

TWENTY minutes later Mrs. Warden tapped lightly on the door. John Rollinson turned his glowing face toward her as she came in, but Mollie, raising happy eyes, felt a sudden chill creep over her when she saw her friend's expression. It was not like that of the woman who loved her — the woman she knew so well, and who cut short John Rollinson's apologetic words with a peremptory wave of the hand.

"I daresay I must resign myself to the inevitable," she began hurriedly. Mollie went at once to her side, and put both arms about her.

"I know you are not pleased," she said, "but I simply could not help it. Things just went that way, Mrs. Warden."

"They generally do, Mollie," answered Mrs. Warden, coldly. She looked across Mollie's shoulder straight at the young man who met her glance so frankly. "You see, Dr. Rollinson, I had hoped that Mollie's choice would be different — forgive me if I say more suitable."

"I at least admire your openness," said John Rollinson, feeling the antagonism in her voice; "I do not know about the suitability, but I am grateful — perhaps

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more grateful than you imagine me — that her choice has not been different.”

Mollie turned and held out one hand, and when John Rollinson clasped her fingers, she drew him nearer to them both.

“There is room in my heart for more than one,” she said wistfully. “For my dear mother and Dan, and for you, Mrs. Warden, who have been so good to me. I have no means of knowing in what way your lives have crossed that one of you should dislike the other, but I only ask that if you really care for me you will try to be friends.”

Her voice trembled. Her lover looked at Mrs. Warden.

“Dislike!” he echoed. “I have no dislike for Mrs. Warden. I have but to look at Mollie, dear madam, to see how wisely and well she has profited by your example. I am grateful from the bottom of my heart, and ask you to include me also in the affection —”

“Mollie will never be happy with you,” said Mrs. Warden, harshly. “It is impossible. You know as well as I do that you cannot make a girl like her happy.”

Bewildered, he stared at her — at the cold eyes, the unsmiling mouth, and a premonition of danger went through him. What did her face say then? There was something — And then he remembered her name, and the story he had heard in Washington that day.

“You know — pardon the irrelevancy of the question — you know that I went to Washington?” he asked abruptly.

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“Yes,” she said coldly. She was standing — she would not sit down. Mollie’s arm had dropped from her and Mollie’s self stood silent, looking at her with pained eyes. “Yes, I know you went to Washington.”

“While there I discovered a trace of my mother — who disappeared nearly thirty years ago. It may be a coincidence — it is either that or the providence of God. Will you listen while I tell you what bearing it may have on you?”

Mrs. Warden turned pale — she felt what was coming. Gazing at her, John Rollinson knew that it was the providence of God and no coincidence, and that behind her pale, clear-cut face lay the key of the mystery.

“It will not be long,” he said. “It is the story of my mother, and the greatest tragedies can be put into the fewest words. She lived, she loved — and she died. But how? That is the question. Mrs. Warden, can you answer it?”

Mollie looked at him with questioning eyes. Mrs. Warden said nothing, although he waited. And then, briefly, quietly, he went on with the unhappy tale of the woman who had lived, had loved and — died. It was indeed a brief, brief tale, but none the less effective.

“And on the very day on which I told myself there was nothing further to be expected, that there was no hope, I entered the house of a stranger and found — her picture. Not alone her picture, but the name of the artist who painted it, the name as well, of the man for whom it was —”

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Mrs. Warden sat down in the nearest chair, heavily. Then she pointed toward the piano.

“Did it — did it look like that?” she asked.

John Rollinson turned, and his eyes fell upon the miniature — the duplicate of the one he had seen in Dr. Grant’s possession. He moved toward it in a mechanical fashion, took it in his hands reverently, held it to the light. Yes, here was the same sweet face, the same gentle eyes, the same waves of dark hair upon the background of pale gold. He stared at it and at her; his gaze went back to the miniature and then once more to her, and his lips trembled — for her living face told a story.

“You?” he said. “You? Who —”

He could not finish. Surely not his mother? His mother could not look at him with eyes in which hatred burned. Hatred — there was no other word for it.

“Oh, no,” she said, “not I — I have not the honor. But your mother was my sister — my younger and my only sister, the idol of my heart. And the memory of whom is as living as my love for her.”

Mollie drew back quietly, feeling that she must efface herself. This was the drama; these two the actors in a tragedy. John Rollinson put his hand to his forehead — what further revelation was there still to come? And now a new spirit seemed to enter into Mrs. Warden — a mocking, biting, stormy spirit. She leaned forward in her chair.

“I have known you a long while — and known of

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you all your life," she said. "I do not like you. Perhaps, in the beginning, I might have cared, if you had any of her ways, or if there was a single feature in your face like hers. But you are your father's very image. You have his manners, his carriage, the poise of your head is his, your voice. You have every single trick of his that won a simple, girlish heart — and broke it."

The vibration in those full tones showed him how strong was the resentment burning within her. She made him feel her meaning — she made him understand just what she meant. Resentment that followed a dead man to his quiet grave! Facing it was too much for the dead man's son.

"Broke it, broke it!" she reiterated. "So it is from me you are to hear how she died! From my lips! Ah, well, I never thought to tell it to you — I thought to let you die in ignorance of it, as well as that man who drove her to desperation. He never knew of me. Katharine never told him. She met him while I was in Europe, traveling companion to an idle woman who needed some one to amuse her. I was witty enough in those young days, though lacking, as Katharine did, the fundamental principles of education. But I could disguise the lack where she could not. I married and returned home with my husband, eager to assure my darling's happiness. She, too, was a wife —"

She broke off. There was something bitter in the recollection.

"Horace Rollinson had begun to tire of his plaything

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even then, and with a last despairing grip upon his affection, she had refrained from telling him what she had not told him at first — that she had a sister living. I flared up and said cruel things, for I was her direct opposite in temper, and I left her in a passion. After that my own life held me. My husband — God knows I was not worthy of him! — tried to make up to me for that sister's love. A little child came, opened its eyes upon a world too harsh for it, and its going left another scar. I had but recovered from the shock of its loss when — when she came — in the dead of night —”

The tears were in her eyes; the tears were streaming down John Rollinson's face. Mollie had covered her face with her hands, for Mrs. Warden's tremulous voice and labored breathing showed how strong an emotion touched her even now.

“She crept into my arms, hid her tired face upon my breast, and sobbed out the story of her heartbreak. I resolved to hold her against all the world. I don't know how any man could so have wounded a woman. And as all my love for her came back to me I was conscious of as great a hatred for that husband. To this day I love that sister — and I hate her husband.”

“Mrs. Warden, do you realize what you are saying!” exclaimed John Rollinson, shuddering.

“I beg your pardon,” said the older woman; “but the thought of her the night she came to me drives me almost mad. My husband was inclined to argue the case with me at first — but when he saw Katharine all

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arguments were silenced. He, too, knew that death was in her face, and he agreed with me that it would be better to let her die in peace — that if she wished to see her husband, she could do so; but if she did not, she should never be troubled by his presence. And she never was.”

“Did you not think of Horace Rollinson at all? Of his pain, his wrecked life, his ruined hopes?” asked John Rollinson, almost savagely. “Did you not think of the fate to which she doomed him?”

“He doomed himself!” said Mrs. Warden, grimly. “When I married, I had no advantages — a surface veneer of correct language acquired from my mistress. My husband helped me to make the best of inherent talent. Katharine was as far above me as the stars — she could have attained a greater height. The story is ended, Dr. Rollinson. Your mother left your father and came to me; but not even my love could keep her. She died in my arms. She was dying when my husband had her portrait painted for the last wedding anniversary we were to spend together. She went first — he followed soon after.”

Old things had power to touch her and to hurt. John Rollinson bent nearer, and his face was solemn.

“My father!” he said. “Through his years of loneliness he taught me to respect all women for her sake; to cherish all women poor in this world’s goods — for she had come from among the poor and might still be one of them. He begged me, when I prayed, to ask that the cloud which had darkened their wedded love might

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one day be dissipated, and they stand face to face, heart to heart, soul to soul, forgiving and forgiven. Those two are together now, Mrs. Warden!" — he spoke exultantly for the cold scorn that looked at him out of her eyes — "and neither your bitterness nor my desire can affect their perfect peace. Had you seen him, had you heard, you, too, would have forgiven. You would have pitied him from the bottom of your heart. He paid, Mrs. Warden, he paid for what would have been a light offense to lighter natures."

She smiled a little.

"I cannot expect Horace Rollinson's son to say otherwise, or to see otherwise," she said; "nor can I expect that you will treat Mollie Farrell in any way different to that in which your father treated Katharine Hollis. We will not talk of it." She put out her hand and clasped Mollie's. "Know this, dear child," she said, her voice soft and sweet again, "only know this — that I love you, and that I cannot forget my love. I, at least, shall never change toward you."

John Rollinson's eyes were dark now — all softness had left them. Mollie looked from one to the other — the proud, unforgiving faces of the two who loved her, and a great pain seemed to rend her heart. She caught her breath sharply, and the hand clasping Mrs. Warden's turned cold and trembled.

"When things grew very hard for me," she said in a low voice, "I thought of you, Mrs. Warden, and I loved you because of your good life; because I felt that you

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had borne great sorrow ; because I felt that some one had wronged you deeply. And so, thinking of you, courage would come to me. You were my model always — you. And now — Tell me, do you think the sister you idolized so would have wanted you to hate her son all these long years ? ”

Mrs. Warden did not answer. Mollie leaned over and slipped both arms about her, and looked up into her face pleadingly.

“ Don’t,” she whispered. “ Dear Mrs. Warden, I love you so ! But I love him too. You have made my world, you have made possible my happiness ; you have made me what I am — you have crowned me. Do not, do not uncrown me ! ”

The girl’s tender voice was full of such feeling as the older woman had never heard in it. Yet it had no power to touch her. She was unresponsive. Mollie turned to her lover.

“ John, can you say nothing ? ”

“ What is there to say ? ” he asked. “ I cannot combat such antagonism. And I am — my father’s son. ”

He spoke proudly. With gentle but firm fingers, Mrs. Warden took Mollie’s arms from about her, and pushed her away.

“ Thank you for reminding me of the fact,” she said. “ Go with your future husband, Mollie ; permit me to wish you both good night. ”

She waited for them to leave her, her attitude admitting of no protest. Mollie, yielding to the pressure of her

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lover's hand, followed him to the door, her yearning eyes turned backward to that proud old face. She felt that she was bidding a last farewell to her dearest friend, and that she had no choice. The door closed gently behind them. Mollie's fingers clung to the knob. Her feet were as if glued to the ground—she could not move. John Rollinson stood beside her in the quiet hall, and as she raised her eyes to his he clasped her to him in a passionate embrace.

“Not a judgment am I going to be, but a blessing! Not a judgment, but a blessing!” he breathed. “Sweetheart, must sorrow ever be waiting upon your threshold? My sweetheart, my wife, my blessing!”

She clung to him.

“She — is so lonely!” she whispered, in the sobbing voice she had used a moment since to her beloved friend; “it breaks my heart to leave her so. John Rollinson, she was so good to me, so good to me! I cannot — I dare not — Wait, wait, I will go back again alone. You are not angry or proud—you have no angry feeling against her? Say it—say it to me quickly. You understand? You will understand?”

“Yes, dear.”

With softened face, out of which all hardness had fled, he stooped and kissed her. “Go back if you will, and I shall wait here for you. Yes, and if I can make any concessions, promise them. Or if I can say a single word that will soften her, say it for me, my love, my blessing!”

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She went back as she had come. Mrs. Warden was seated in the big chair, with the pictured miniature clasped to her breast. There was a striking pathos in the loneliness of her shrinking figure, and Mollie, who had emerged from just such loneliness, was struck to the heart. She went forward silently and knelt upon the floor, and put up one hand timidly. Mrs. Warden was not startled. The girl leaned nearer.

"It's Mollie," she whispered huskily, as if she were a little child; "it's only Mollie, Mrs. Warden."

There was no response in words. But Mrs. Warden breathed more quickly.

"I can't go," said the girl, "I can't leave you — I can't. I am on my knees to you. Do not cast me off. You don't know how much I love you. You don't, or you couldn't hurt me so. It will break my heart to leave you."

Mrs. Warden's lips set grimly.

"No, Mollie Farrell," she said; "not even for you."

"You are sending me away then?" piteously. "Don't you remember me — how weak I was, and how ignorant, and how you taught me? And how I learned to love you so? Little by little? And now — now — you're sending — me — away —"

"Mollie — you know better."

"But aren't you? Oh, I was so happy — so happy! I might have known it could not last. The greatest joy that can come to a woman had come to me — and you hate the man I love! You hate the man I love!"

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It is only a temptation. Can't you realize that? Let me help you to conquer it, if I can. I'm not as strong as you — just a girl who loves you. For my sake, try to think kindly of him — for my sake, do not banish me. If you can't overcome it, I'll be satisfied. Really, really. If you feel that the old hatred must stay there, I will never mention his name to you. On this night that has been the happiest of my life send me out with a gleam of hope. Do, do!"

No words could picture the fervor of those tones, for Mollie Farrell was carried out of herself. Voice, eyes, lips, were eloquent; her whole body seemed to plead for her. Mrs. Warden could not resist this love. She bent over, and with quivering lips kissed her.

"Mollie," she said, and her tones were curiously like John Rollinson's that night long past — "her night and Dan's" — when he had heard the girl's story, when he had known her capabilities for self-sacrifice, "Mollie, Mollie, Mollie!"

Mollie clung to her, saying nothing. Her silence said more than words. Mrs. Warden made a passionate effort. The miniature fell upon her lap.

"I'll try," she said then. "Mollie, I *will* try. Only leave me now, dear, leave me. This has torn my heart almost beyond endurance. Leave me to myself — I will be all right to-morrow. And tell him —" her throat worked — "tell him — tell him she forgave; that she would have been glad, at the last, to see them both. But they were away and we could not reach them in

The Universal Law

time, and she accepted it as a punishment. Tell him all this, Mollie."

"I will, I will! And you love me—you *do* love me?"

"Always." Her fine face bent to the young cheek, her white hair mingled with the black locks. "Always, little blessing."

"Thank you," said Mollie, "thank you, my own dear friend, for calling me that, too. It seems a happy omen; God grant that I may be a blessing to every one I know, and, more than all, to those I love."

* * * * *

Isn't it the open secret? "Little children, love ye one another!" It is the universal law. It is the law of heaven; it is the only law that will make the earth like paradise. "Little children, love ye one another!" Neither king nor peasant, neither high nor low, neither rich nor poor—only one great human family, with one great human Heart yearning warmly over the beings it has created, with the one great law pulsing through its throbbing arteries: "Little children, oh, My little children, love ye one another!"

EPILOGUE

IN a week's time he was to die. He was dogged, indifferent, unrepentant, and the keepers said nothing could touch him. He lay, face downward, on his pallet, and would hold intercourse with no one. Men came and spoke to him of Christ's love, and the place Christ had for those who were sorry for their sins. But he turned deaf ear to all.

"I think you had better run down and see that Johnson chap," said Father Burke, more in joke than in earnest, as Sister Benigna came to him with a tale of a conversion which, through God's mercy, she had just succeeded in accomplishing. "He's going to die Thursday next, and no one can do anything with him. You go."

He did not mean the words, but Sister Benigna's face was shadowed as she went out of the priest's presence. She had come to make arrangements for the baptism of her convert — and while she understood the half-laughing vein in which he had spoken, she was wont to take such things seriously. Perhaps she could do some good —

But then she remembered the story of the man's fearful crime, and shuddered with aversion.

"I am too busy," she said briefly. "Besides, women

Epilogue

are not allowed in the men's prison, and Mother would surely refuse me if I asked. I cannot manage it."

So she tried all that day to dismiss the subject from her mind.

That night, before she went to chapel, one of the Religious spoke to her.

"Do not forget poor Johnson, Sister," she said; "you have heard about him? He is to be hanged on Thursday, and his heart is as hard as a stone. Give him one of your Memorares."

Sister Benigna felt her lips grow white. She hesitated. Just then the Mother Superior came down the broad stairs. As if moved by an inspiration, Sister Benigna went to her.

"Mother, if I can arrange it to-morrow, I would like to go to the County Jail. Do you think you can give me permission?"

She looked at her, mentally praying for a refusal. But with a bright smile the Mother laid her hand upon Sister Benigna's arm.

"You may go to any part of the prison you please," she said, and passed on.

Sister Benigna's heart sank within her. She went into the chapel. When she knelt before the tabernacle, her prayer, though voiceless, was made with all the fervor of her heart.

"You know, dear Lord, I can't possibly go. I have so much to do." She pondered a little: "Unless it be Thy will. If it be Thy will, do with me as Thou pleasest."

Epilogue

That night her last waking thought was of the morrow.

"If the sun shines, I know I cannot go," she said, "there will be too many other duties." And then she prayed again: "God grant it may be a fair day tomorrow."

But it rained. It poured as if the heavens had opened, and Sister Benigna realized that God had sent this duty in her way. So at the very earliest hour of the afternoon, she went, with her companion, to the County Jail. The official at the desk looked at the black-robed nun with some curiosity.

"You have a man named Johnson here," she said. "If you can allow it, I should like to speak to him."

"I cannot," he said, "but the warden will be back directly — and you can ask him in person. Go along the corridor and wait for him."

Sister Benigna did so. Before long two men came through the gloomy corridor. One of them looked at her with sudden interest — the other questioningly.

"I would like to see Johnson," said Sister Benigna. "I believe the warden can give me permission. Are you he?"

"I am he, but you can't see him. Women are not allowed in the men's prison."

"I knew that before I came," she answered gently; "but this is such a terrible case. It may be his last chance. If it will not cause you too much inconvenience, do allow me to go."

The warden, inclined to be surly, opened his lips

Epilogue

again to deny her petition — the nun's intention did not appeal to him. His companion spoke then.

"Let her go," he said in an undertone. Sister Benigna caught the words, and gave him a swift glance of gratitude.

"Thank you," she said ; " God will give you a last chance."

"Come," said the warden.

She followed him past those narrow cells where erring human beings were confined and where curious faces peered out at her in the twilight of the place. He paused before a cell at the end of the gloomy compartment, and called a name sharply.

"Johnson!" he said in a harsh voice, "Johnson, do you hear me? A lady has come to see you."

He drew back. Sister Benigna stood with her face to the barred grating. Her sight had grown sharp in the semigloom. She was very pale and her heart was beating tumultuously.

"God give me words," she was praying, "God give me words."

Something stirred inside. Something rose and shuffled to the grating. A dark face, with lips parted over cruel-looking white teeth, was shoved up close against the other side. The saint and the sinner looked at each other. Sister Benigna scarcely realized the first sickening throb of fear ere a new and great warmth flooded through her limbs ; her beautiful eyes gazed straight into his.

Epilogue

“ Oh, you poor fellow,” she said pitifully. “ You poor, poor, *poor* fellow ! ”

Her gentle voice, with its sweet and tender pathos, her face, her garb, seemed to stir the unfortunate being separated from her only by those iron bars.

“ I have come to tell you something,” she went on ; “ will you listen to me ? I won’t preach to you, I promise. But just listen to the few words I have to say, and when you bid me, I will leave.”

“ Stay ! ” he said. That was all.

And he listened. I shall not repeat here what she said. She spoke, and the soul within that narrow cell awoke, and saw beyond sin and crime and death. Rose up to meet the joy in her voice, her face, her lips. She spoke of what she knew, in picturing Christ’s mercy, and His love for those who hated Him. And the befogged mind began to lighten, and the huge hands clung to the bars, and the great body shook, and the big head drooped, and sobs rent that mighty chest, as that tender, imploring voice went on. The silence in the place was deathless. Crouched up against the doors of the surrounding cells there were other creatures who had tasted the desolation of wrong-doing and eaten its fruit. They were listening, too ; her words touched more than one that day, but she was concerned only for the man about to die. The rest of her work, God willing, she was to come back and perfect later on. I cannot tell it here — it would be too long : the story of Sister Benigna’s blessed work.

Epilogue

“Look upon this great Lord who has so loved men,” she said. She was not allowed to give the prisoners anything, that she knew, but she managed to fix a picture of our dear Redeemer between two of the intersecting bars. “I shall send you a priest at once — tell me: you *will* listen to him?”

“Yes,” he answered. “I will.”

For, God be praised, this poor being was ready for the sacrifice — a sacrifice as old as the sphinx inscrutable and yet as new; mightier than the world, overcoming the world: the sacrifice of a humble and a contrite heart. With a few more words she went away, and the prisoner strained his eyes after her departing form. Then he returned to his pallet and lay there — but this time there were tears upon his cheek.

The warden said nothing. What he thought was not evident, as Sister Benigna thanked him for his kindness. The man whose intervention had been the indirect means of saving a hapless soul, was still in the outside corridor, waiting for them. He stepped forward.

“Pardon me,” he said, “but may I ask your name?”

“Sister Mary Benigna,” she answered.

“Sister Mary Benigna? A Catholic religious?”

“A Catholic religious.”

“And will you tell me — do not think me bold — how Miss Selleck enjoys the transformation? Yes,” as she started, “you do not remember me, probably, but I saw you several times. I am Harold Seymour, of Selleck Brothers and Seymour.” He laughed at the

Epilogue

pleased light that shot across her face. She held out her hand with an exclamation of delight.

"I am so glad to meet you!" she exclaimed. "I have not seen my father in quite a while. He is well?"

"Very well, indeed."

"And Mac? I was gratified to hear that he is taking life seriously at last. Is he as droll as ever?"

"Just as droll — the life of the place. Mr. Selleck and I are sobersides."

"It seems queer to have to ask for them. My father is not melancholy — he does not regret —"

"He is happy," said Harold Seymour, "as well he may be, if you are as happy as you look."

The nun lifted her shining face. It had been beautiful when she, the courted, petted child of wealth and fashion, had indulged her every caprice — but now its beauty spoke of one whose thoughts were bathed in light.

"I am happy," she said. "Only too happy — there is no happiness in all this earth like mine."

He waited a little while. Then he held out his hand.

"Farewell," he said humbly; "and pray for me."

"I will, I do — for every one," she answered. "Farewell."

So, with her who had been Edith Selleck, do I, too, say farewell.

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